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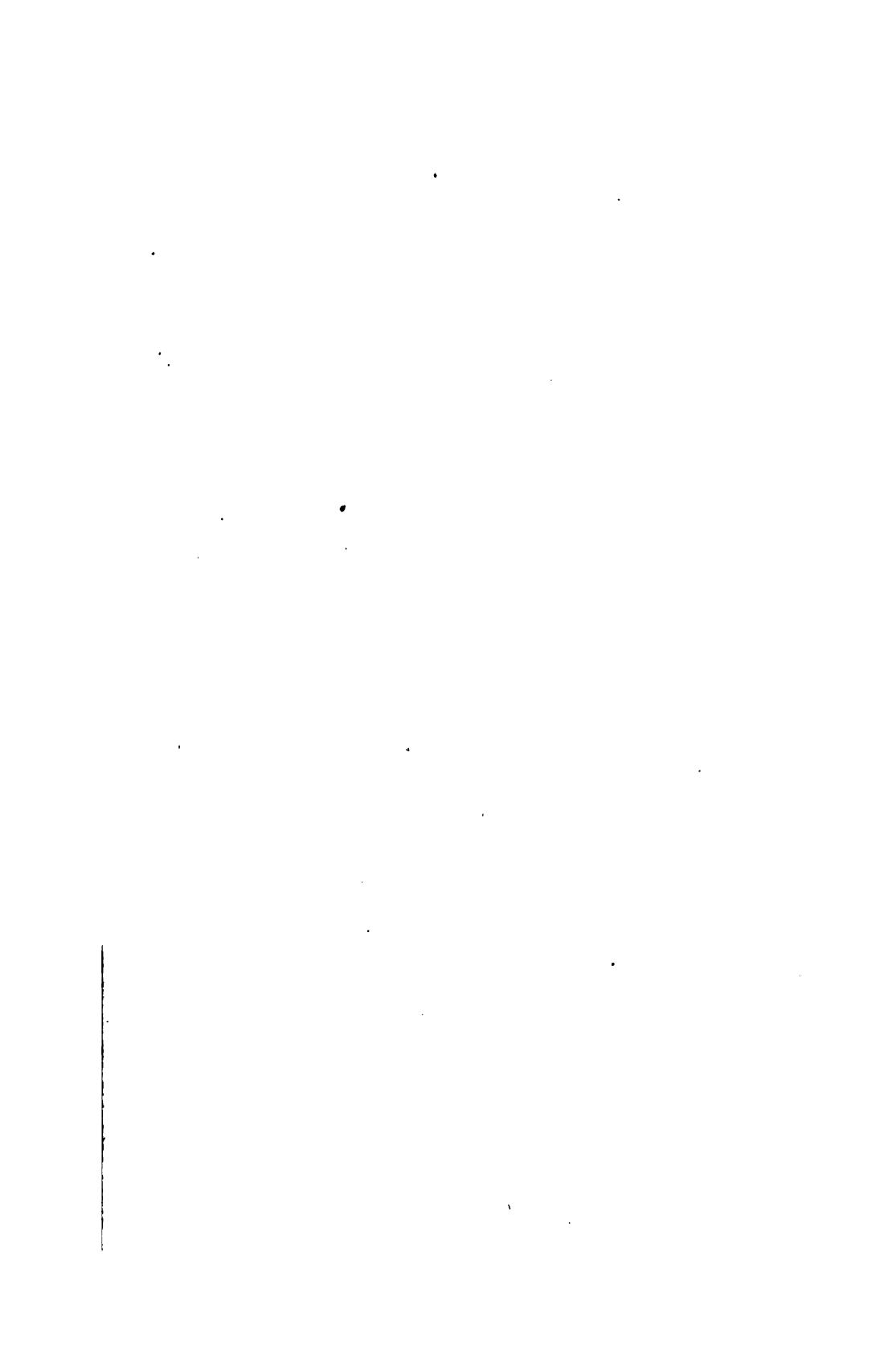




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A NOVEL.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY

HARRIET LYDIA STEVENSON.

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A HEART TWICE WON.

CHAPTER I.

THE miserable hours passed by Reginald on the hill side, where he was learning his first bitter lesson in life, had been spent in scarcely less painful a manner by his mother, as she lay on her sofa, ill both in body and mind. He knew the worst—

“ His tortured heart and ear
Had nothing more to feel or fear.”

But in addition to the miseries she knew there was the still greater agony of suspense. How would he bear it? Had he followed

her? Would she keep her promise and tell him all?

These questions she asked herself a thousand times, though they were questions to which no answer could possibly be returned. Thus the weary hours slowly passed ; but he came not.

Sir Lionel sat by the fire, he was pretending to read the leading article in the *Times*, but he could not have derived either benefit or information from it, as he was holding the paper upside down, quite unconscious of the humiliating fact. Every now and then, he addressed some remark to his sister, to which she replied in an apparently unconcerned tone. Each was trying to hide from the other, the intense anxiety that each felt.

Occasionally, Sir Lionel strolled to the windows, and made some trivial, and generally unfounded remark about the weather, while he was straining his eyes to catch a glimpse

of his nephew. But still he came not. At last, when the sweet thrilling chime of the clock on the chimney-piece gave notice that it only wanted a quarter of an hour to the dinner hour, Mrs. Douglas could bear up no longer.

"Lionel, I shall lose my senses if I remain any longer, without taking some steps about my child," she said; "think what may have happened! something dreadful must have occurred to keep him all these hours away!"

She could not bring herself to say what her own heart suspected, but Sir Lionel evidently dreaded some terrible catastrophe.

"Let us wait one quarter of an hour," he said, "and if he does not come by that time, I will go to Mrs. Churchill's house, and find out whether he has been there; he probably is ignorant that we know anything about the matter, and it is better to conceal from him

what we do know, unless it is absolutely necessary to tell him."

Another quarter slowly crept away. Oh! how it seemed to loiter—the very tick of the clock sounded slower than usual, to the ears of the two anxious watchers. At last, the clock struck seven, and before its musical echo died away a step was heard on the gravel.

The hall door opened, and a slow heavy foot-step crossed the hall; and Reginald entered the room. His mother pressed her hands together in silent thankfulness. One great terror had been got over, he was alive.

She had pictured him lying on the lonely hills somewhere or other; no longer a thing of earth, only the remains of her son, doomed to a violent death by his own hand. This had been spared her; but when she looked at the change which a few hours had wrought in him, she felt how awfully he must have suf-

fered. He came to the fire, and stood for a moments warming his hands, which she saw were shaking with cold.

Could that worn, haggard face be the same on which she had only a few hours before, seen such a bright, happy expression? His hair and whiskers were dripping with rain, there was a look on his face which told of what had been going on within; the struggle in his soul which had left its marks only too visibly. There was a look of reckless despair which shocked his mother. His eyes had a strange wild light in them, and his face was white as death.

“A jolly evening, isn’t it?” he said, with a forced bitter laugh.

“Reginald, come here,” said his mother, and he slowly and wearily crossed the room to where she lay. “My child,” she said, as he knelt by her sofa, and she placed her hands on his burning forehead, “you are so dripping

wet, do change your clothes. I am not well, and if you are ill too, who is to nurse me?"

"Mother!" he said, as he fixed his eyes with an expression of the most intense agony on her face, "would to God that you never had nursed me, that I had died before this bitter day made me the most wretched, heart-broken creature on God's earth," and he laid his head on her lap, and groaned.

What could his mother do but cry over him? tears were all which she had to give, and they were given plentifully. In another moment he started up.

"What a fool I am," he said, with a laugh, a laugh which told more than any tears could have done; "this is my birthday, let it be a merry one; wish me many happy returns of the day, mother, and each succeeding one to be as happy as this;" and he went out of the room as he spoke.

At dinner he ate nothing; but his uncle looked serious as he drank one glass of wine after another. His face was flushed, his eyes unnaturally bright, and every now and then a cold shiver seemed to run through him. The fever was already beginning, and it flashed in his eyes, and shone on his cheeks.

"I'll tell you what, Reginald," said his uncle, after he had returned to the dining-room from his usual task of assisting his mother to the drawing-room, and he saw his unsteady step, "you'll drink no more wine to-night."

"I shall finish that bottle," said Reginald, with a strange laugh.

"We shall see that," said Sir Lionel, and catching up the bottle, he walked to the window, opened it, and sent the contents of the bottle out on to the grass.

"You have had too much wine, sir; you are drunk, sir," said his uncle, sternly.

Reginald looked at him for a moment, and then, laying his hand on his shoulder, he said, in a low, broken voice, which contrasted painfully with his late reckless manner—

“I think I could drink myself dead ; if I could obtain forgetfulness, if I could cease to feel—could lose my senses, could be anything but the wretch I am ;” and he struck his forehead with his hand.

“My boy,” said his uncle, and tears stood in his eyes, and his voice trembled, “from my soul I feel for you ! I cannot offer you comfort—sympathy will do nothing here ; time, and a brave heart, will be your healers. God bless you, my dear boy, but remember your mother ! consider her.”

“My mother ; yes, she is all I have now,” said the unhappy young man ; and they both went to the drawing-room.

It is a difficult task to manage a man who is evidently on the verge of a serious illness.

Had it been a woman she would have been sent straight off to bed, a huge bowl of gruel with nitre would have been prescribed—her feet put into hot water, and various other remedies would have been forced upon her. But you can't do all these things to a man; therefore Reginald declined all attempts at dosing him. The gruel was made, but he sent it all into the fire, and when his faithful Jenkins appeared with a monstrous bucket of boiling water, he was requested to deposit it outside the door. He felt miserably ill. His head was aching frightfully; there were pains in all his bones, and he was alternately shivering with cold, and burning with fever. He felt that he was on the eve of some serious illness; but his mental ailments were far more painful than the bodily illness which threatened him. He felt a strange, unnatural wish to die—anything to get rid of life—anything to procure forgetfulness, even though

it were the grave itself that should bring the boon. Thus he sat, thinking of all that had passed during that miserable day ; it had seemed years, and yet not twelve hours had been spent since he heard the fatal news. If life were to creep henceforth at this pace, what centuries would seem the ordinary life of man. Death would be far preferable to such a life. Then he speculated as to what she, who had done all this, would feel, when she heard of his death. Would she grieve at the destruction which she had wrought ? He thought of her allusions in that fatal letter to his destroying himself. Was she a woman ? he asked himself, or a fiend ? Then, tender memories of her came back ; these were even more maddening than the others. He had thought that his cup of bitterness was too full to hold another drop ; but now there was added another feeling more torturing than the rest—the crowning agony of all—“jealousy,

which is cruel as the grave," now began to torment him. The first shock of finding out that she had deceived him in so many ways, and the cruel discovery that she did not love him, had taken up his whole heart and thoughts, and yet, he had not begun to realize the other fact that she loved another. Now, that started up in his soul—misery enough not to be loved by her; tenfold agony to remember that she loved, but not him. How bitterly the truth came before him, that all the time that they had been together, he only living for her—that her heart and thoughts had been entirely devoted to another!—that she had never for one moment cared for him. How he anathematised the man she did love! Who was he? this Karl! some wretched foreigner, who "lived by his wits," and supported himself and her by gambling. Good Heavens! how he had fallen, he thought to himself, to be the rejected lover of such a

woman. He, with such high, exalted ideas of what a woman should be, and of what his wife should be, to be so taken in. Aye—there was the sorest point to his man's powers of discernment, to have been so thoroughly taken in.

“Oh,” he said, “if she had but told me that she never could love me—had but warned me—”

Now, did you ever hear of such a preposterous idea? Did any one ever hear of an angler telling a fish that he only wanted him for the excitement of the thing, not for the use of him afterwards? whether he have a whole basket of fish by him, will he refuse to play any fish who may present himself, simply because he does not want him? I appeal to the disciples of “old Izaak.” Would any of you warn off a fine, fat salmon, or a speckled trout, or even the Trent’s “one-eyed perch,” merely because you did not

want him for your larder? The pleasure of playing with and torturing him would be none the less sweet because you had no *arrière pensée* as to eating him. Oh, no, play him, then, when he is caught, and you find that you don't want to keep him, throw him in, to sink or swim, according to the extent of injuries that he has received; but to expect that a fisherman is to tell the fish to keep out of the way, or that a human angler for hearts is to hang out "danger signals," is too absurd! Catch your fish, whether you mean to make use of him or not. This is the style of angling in the nineteenth century. But poor Reginald knew nothing of the rules of fishing, or he would not have expected that a heartless coquette should have warned him of his danger!

"A gambler, too!" he repeated bitterly.
"I wonder what she is not! and yet how

hard to believe all this of such a being. Oh, how lovely, how fascinating! shall I ever see anything like her again? those eyes, how they haunt me; that voice, how it echoes in my heart; will it ever be silent there? never—never! Oh, Inez, Inez, can you hear me now? What is she doing now?" And then he burst into a peal of horrible laughter. "I know what she is doing—most likely telling it all to that cursed Karl; no doubt she is with him, and she is amusing him at my expense. I have heard that the devils laugh sometimes over a lost soul!" Thus did he rave on, at first connectedly, but as the night wore on, his words became wild and incoherent. The terrible and unexpected mental shock which he had received, the hours passed on the hill-side dripping with wet, and the unusual quantity of wine which he had taken, were, each taken separately, enough to have

brought on some serious illness. Their combined effects were too much for him; and when his servant went into his room in the morning, he found him delirious; and by night he was raving in brain fever.

CHAPTER II.

DAYS passed on, and Reginald gradually grew weaker, his strength seemed to have passed away in the paroxysms of delirium, during which it required several people to hold him, so terrible were his struggles. He appeared to have some uncontrollable desire to get away. A constant watch was kept upon him; and even then he contrived to rush from his room. His ravings were dreadful — one moment he heaped terrible denunciations upon the woman who had caused all this; then he called her by every endearing name;

then fancied that she was by his side, called on her to sing his favourite songs—all these in turn. Sometimes he pronounced his mother's name—called on her to save him—then heaped reproaches on her for having taken care of him in his childish disorders, instead of letting him die. There was such truth and apparent connectedness in all that he said, that it seemed impossible that they were but the ravings of a disordered brain. Then came the almost as terrible calm, when over-wearied and almost worn out, he lay in a state which was so like death, that it seemed the forerunner of it. His mother never left him, and Sir Lionel was unwearied in his attendance by the sick bed, which neither of them now doubted would soon be the bed of death. The faithful Jenkyns, too, was there ; he had followed his master through the different engagements in which his regiment had taken place. He had fought by his side

through Inkerman's fire and blood, and had caught him as he fell, struck down with the wound which had so nearly added one more to the long list of victims who found a soldier's grave on that bloody day—one more name to be inscribed on the rolls of martial fame. And now the old soldier, who had nursed him with the gentleness of a woman, during a long illness far from his home, where there was no woman's hand to minister to his wants, no woman's voice to soothe his pains—once more stood by him. He had all that love and sympathy could do for him. Alas ! how little even these can do in such an hour ! His mother watched him day after day with agony which, to be described, must be felt. As she saw his strength hourly ebbing, she felt how much her son had been to her, and she knew what her future life must be without that one object for which alone she had lived. Was this stroke a punishment for making him

an idol? It was hard to lose him; others who had numerous children, still rejoiced without one vacant place at their table—one vacant chair at their hearth; must she—who had but one child, one joy in life—give him up? Sir Lionel had no words to comfort her; he only looked for one termination to this. He felt persuaded that his nephew would never leave the room where he now lay, but to be carried to his last resting place.

Dr. Gulson was unremitting in his kindness and attention. He did not conceal from Mrs. Douglas that he had the worst opinion of the case, but still there might be a change; her son was young, his constitution was unimpaired by disease; as long as there was life there was hope. One could only die with the other, but both were now so faint, that a single breath would annihilate them. The doctor had prepared them for the crisis of the disorder, when a great change would probably

take place. If that change were a favourable one, he might recover; if an unfavourable one— ; the rest of the sentence was unspoken—

“ Uttered not—but comprehended.”

He could not tell her what would be the other result, but she understood. He promised to come at the hour when he looked for the change, and the sad watchers once more resumed their place in the room which they doubted not would soon contain all that was mortal only of him who lay so unconscious of the agony around him.

CHAPTER III.

IT was mid-night; in another hour the change, on which hung the life or death of one inhabitant of that sick room, and the hopes and happiness of another, might, be expected.

It is an awful thing to stand by the bed of one, who, we think and fear, is passing into eternity. The angel of death, unseen by mortal eyes, is near, watching for his prey. It is an awful thing to be thus as it were, in the ante-chamber of the great king of terrors; we feel how thin a partition divides us from

his actual presence. A human being, a mortal form of flesh and blood like our own, is passing away from a world of time and sense, and will soon be but a lump of senseless clay. Who can tell what intercourse that soul, unconscious of all things earthly, may now be holding with invisible beings of another world. There is something most solemn and mysterious in death. All our tears and prayers cannot move that inexorable tyrant. His hand once stretched out, who can turn it back? The grave is insatiable; it is one of the four things which the wise man tells us, "say not, it is enough." It is an appetite which grows by feeding, and it is not satisfied.

The chamber of death, or what we think will be such, is a solemn place. The dread silence, the long ghost-like shadows thrown by the shrouded candle; the pale, haggard looks of the watchers, the still motionless

figure, on whom all eyes are bent with earnestness of which he is all unconscious ; all these are entailed upon us by the primeval curse upon sin, which brought death into the world, ever since which fatal day “the earth rings hollow with the tread of graves.” Despair and utter hopelessness were in the heart of the mother, as with intense agony she watched the moments stealing, on which were to decide that upon which so much depended.

Reginald lay perfectly motionless, not a pulse appeared to throb, not a breath seemed to stir ; apparently he was already dead, so utterly lifeless did he seem. His thin pale hand hung over the side of the bed ; oh ! how emaciated it was. The large blue veins stood out painfully on his temples, and in the thin wasted hands. How unlike the Reginald of but a few days back ; what

agonies of mind and body he must have suffered to bring him to this.

It wanted but a few moments to the appointed time, the slow monotonous tick of the clock seemed to vibrate to the mother's very soul, and each sound fell like a knell on her heart.

At this moment a footstep was heard in the passage, the door gently opened, and the doctor entered. The criminal, who watches the countenances of the jury as they return from the decision which will be his life or death warrant, and tries to read his sentence there before it is spoken, does not cast a more intensely anxious look upon them than did the mother fix upon the doctor, as he stood by her son's bedside, and put his hand on the pulse, and across the forehead of the invalid. He looked at her, and she saw there was hope in his expression. He came towards her,

and calmly, though his own heart was full of joy, he spoke,

“ You have borne sorrow with patience, can you bear joy ? ”

But it was too much for her, this sudden revulsion from death to life, from despair to hope ; and before the last words had left his lips, she had fainted.

They carried her to her room, where she soon regained her consciousness, and heard the blessed news confirmed. “ Thy son liveth ! ” were the words that her brother breathed into her ears—happy tidings for her mother’s heart.

“ And now,” said the doctor, “ your son will require extreme care, he is scarcely yet out of danger, any agitation or excitement will bring back the illness. I have given him a draught from the effects of which he will probably awake to consciousness, then will be the time when his mother will be of use ;

at present, my dear friend, he does not need you. When he asks for you, be ready to go to him, but now lie down, and endeavour to take some rest, that you may be able to nurse him ; you will have plenty of that, for such an illness as he has had will take many a long day to shake off." So she slept ; the strain upon the soul was removed, and the soft dews of kindly sleep sank upon her wearied eyes, and she entered for awhile the land of forgetfulness.

When she awoke after hours of calm and refreshing sleep, her son was once more conscious, and in accents so low and faint as scarcely to be heard had whispered the name of "mother," that sweetest, holiest name in all creation, which is a volume in one word ! Never had it sounded so sweet to her ear as now; she had never expected to hear it again, had thought that ere now the lips that loved to breathe it would be silent for ever. But

"this her son, who was dead, was alive again, who was lost was found," and she rejoiced over him with exceeding great joy.

He was long extremely weak, and his brain and mind so over-taxed that for some time he seemed unable to take in any facts connected with his illness. His memory appeared unable to go back beyond a few hours. The past as yet seemed a blank to him, and the remembrance of all his misery was not brought to him. His mother dreaded the moment that memory and reflection would return. They came at last, like a sudden flash of lightning shining into a dark room, and showing the objects which before were unseen. She was holding his hand in hers, and had given him some flowers which he was looking at with the pleasure of returning health. Suddenly, he started up with more violence than his thin wasted frame seemed capable of, and striking

his forehead, he exclaimed, "It was no dream ; all these sufferings have been real ! For God's sake, mother," he said, with a look of passionate appeal, " tell me how much is reality, and what is a dream ? It is all so confused that I cannot separate truth and seeming. What brought me here ? What made me ill ? Ah, I see it all now," and he sunk back on his pillow.

"Inez, you were no dream ! Oh ! why did'nt I die before these torturing memories woke again ? Mother, I cannot thank you for your care as I did half an hour ago. Why did you wish to bring me back to such miseries, when I was almost gone ? Why did'nt you put your hand on my mouth, and put an end to me altogether ? a very little would have done it, and I should have been at rest now." He was too weak to say more, and the exertion had reduced his little strength, and it was many days before he

gained the ground he lost that day. But time, the great healer in mental diseases, by degrees soothed these violent outbursts—the iron had sunk deep into his soul, but he was comparatively reconciled. The nature of his mental malady had changed; at first it was wounded love that rankled so bitterly—now, it was wounded pride. He still loved her, for such a passion as his will not die (as it was born) in a day; but it was a thing of the past—it was a love in which regret found a place, he regretted her having been so unworthy, but did not regret having lost her. He mourned more for his wasted love, his deceived confidence, than for the woman who had wrought this injury. Over the death-bed of his hopes, and the vault which contained the ashes of his trust and confidence in woman's love and purity, he heaved more sighs than he breathed for their slayer, but the cause and effect were too intimately

joined to be easily separated by any mental analytic chemistry. The past was never absent from his thoughts, and his mother grieved to see how utterly uninterested he was in all outward things. When he was well enough to go into the drawing-room, he either lay on the sofa or buried himself in an arm-chair without occupation. Both mind and body had an unhealthy tone. He could not be prevailed upon to stir out of the house, and having once strolled to the window, he caught sight of the window of the well-known and fatally remembered house, and never did he approach it again. The slightest and most trifling thing that recalled his fatal love affair to his mind, seemed sufficient to bring on a gloom that was most painful to his mother. He turned away with an expression of anguish from the very sight of a flower; their very perfume seemed unbearable to him, and never would he enter the conservatory from which

he once carried away every day the choicest flowers which he could find. *She* was associated with flowers, and he hated the sight of them. He was suffering from that miserable aching void in his heart, which nothing could fill ; a pang that incessantly tortured him with a gnawing bitter anguish and loathing of life, with an utter indifference to all it could offer, such as Victorian describes when mourning over the fancied infidelity of his Preciosa.

" Yet

To go through life unloving and unloved,
To feel that thirst and hunger of the soul
We cannot still ; that longing, that wild impulse,
And struggle after something we have not,
And cannot have : the effort to be strong ;
And, like the Spartan boy, to smile and smile,
While secret wounds do bleed beneath our cloaks ;
All this the dead feel not,—the dead alone !
Would I were with them!"

SPANISH STUDENT.

CHAPTER IV.

SIR LIONEL and Mrs. Douglas were both in profound ignorance of the reasons which Mrs. Churchill had given to Reginald of her so suddenly leaving Malvern, and of the cause of the breaking off the acquaintance. They knew nothing of the fortunate carelessness on her part—which had given the wrong letter to Reginald, thereby proving to him, in her own handwriting, facts which probably he would have disbelieved on any less authority. They knew nothing beyond the certainty that something very terrible must have oc-

curred to cause the melancholy state to which he was reduced. After some time, when all fear of a relapse was past, his uncle determined to give him so much of Mrs. Churchill's antecedents as would, he felt sure, put the last finishing stroke to anything like love that might yet remain in his heart, and which, to a man of honour and principle, would be quite sufficient for ever to destroy the last lingering affection. Reginald himself had never alluded to the subject, except in the few heart-broken words which had burst from him the day his great sorrow had fallen upon him, and subsequently when memory, which had slept during his illness, had suddenly awoke, and once more resumed her torturing powers—then had he wildly appealed to his mother as to the reality of his suspicions. Since that day the subject had been tacitly avoided by both. He was not likely to allude to it, and it was a subject

on which even a mother could ask no confidences. It was the first sorrow which he had ever borne alone, and the burden pressed heavily on his heart. His were inward wounds which no hand could heal, which no sympathy could reach. It vexed Sir Lionel to see his nephew so totally prostrated by his grief for the loss of such a woman.

“ I’ll tell you what, Adela,” he said, one day to his sister, “ I’m disappointed in that boy ; to see a fine young fellow moping like a love-sick girl, and for such an unworthy creature too ! I only wish he’d been behind the curtain when she talked of him ! I think that would have cured him ; however, I’ve only been waiting till he was a little stronger, to tell him all I know of this precious Mrs. Churchill, for whom he is wasting his life, and losing his health and good looks. It provokes me to see him day after day sitting hunched up in that arm-chair, or lying on the

sofa, when he ought to try and shake off all memories of her."

"Ah! but recollect," said his mother, sighing, "he is yet suffering from the effects of his bodily illness—how physically weak he is! As to his appetite, why he does not eat as much as a child would. I fear he sleeps but little at night."

"I do not see how he is to eat or sleep," said his uncle, "as long as he never stirs from the fire. I dread this morbid state becoming permanent, and I fully intend speaking to him on the subject. He's too fine a fellow to be allowed to lose his health, perhaps his senses, for an unworthy woman, when the knowledge of what she really is might save him. I'll just give him till to-morrow, and then I fully intend to open his eyes. I shall go to his room before he gets up, and when he is flat on his back in bed he must listen to what I have to say, and if he tells me to leave

the room I won't stir—and he is not strong enough to turn me out if he wishes to do so; so he must just hear me out, and if what I tell him of that woman's career—past and present—doesn't make him both hate and despise her, he isn't worth taking any more trouble about."

So the next morning Sir Lionel—apparently very brave, but feeling a little nervous as to how his worthy intentions might be received—paid a visit to his nephew before he was up. Reginald seemed surprised at this early visit, but his manners had become so habitually languid that he took no pains to rouse himself to do the honours of his bedroom to his uncle.

Sir Lionel was rather at a loss how to commence his operations. He had practiced several plans during the time of breakfast, but every plan of attack suddenly deserted him. So he thought there there was nothing

for it but to plunge boldly into the subject at once, and trust to the inspiration of the moment. So, seating himself by his nephew's side, and gently taking his hand, he said—

"My dear boy,—You must, of course, be aware of the great anxiety which your mother and I have felt for your welfare and happiness, and how deeply we grieve at the sad condition to which you have been reduced. I am ignorant of the exact state of affairs; but I cannot any longer allow you to remain unconscious of facts which I feel sure will very much alter your opinion of the person whose acquaintance has been such a misfortune to you. I need not say how unwilling I have been to take upon myself such an office, but you must hear me patiently, while I give you a history of the antecedents of that most fascinating and dangerous of women—Inez Churchill."

Reginald drew his hand away and buried

his face under the bed-clothes—he would hear all, whatever there was to tell, but no eye should see what it would cost him.

His uncle, excessively pleased and surprised, that he not begged him to leave the room, continued his address—

“Her mother was a Spanish actress of the vilest character; who her father was, nobody knows. When her mother was dying she persuaded a rich English merchant resident at Malaga, to take charge of the child, who was then about ten years old. He had lately lost an only child about the same age. He had often seen Inez, and some fancied resemblance to his own lost child induced him to accede to the dying request of the mother, to whom he had been a generous patron, and whose acting he had always warmly admired. He had her educated most carefully, as far as accomplishments went; her singing and music were perfect. It was said that her guardian

intended to have married her himself—but young as she was, reports reached him of her levity of conduct, which determined him to send her back for a while to the convent where she had been educated, and from which he had taken her to his own house when she reached the age of seventeen.

“ Dreading that she might resemble her mother in character, as much as she did in her great beauty and her talents, he hoped that by sending her back to the strict discipline of the convent for some time, he might check the tendencies that began to show themselves. Among her friends at Malaga, there were none with whom she was more intimate than a young English officer, who had brought his wife in the last stage of consumption to try, as a last hope, the air of that place. The wife was young, beautiful, and unsuspecting ; the husband more weak than actually wicked, at least in comparison to the woman who won

him from his wife. Over the dying bed of her friend did this girl, not then eighteen, arrange her plans. Her heart revolted from the idea of the convent to which her guardian had sternly threatened to send her. There was but one way in which this could be avoided. That way was the destruction of her friend's happiness, and as it turned out the cause of her death, but that was of little consequence in *her* eyes.

" Such was the power that she had acquired over the wretched husband, that he left his wife alone and dying in a foreign land, and fled with her. They went to India, where his regiment had lately arrived. His wife was unknown to his brother officers, and Inez passed as such. This only lasted a few weeks. The spell that her charms had cast over her lover was suddenly broken. An irresistible wish to see his injured wife once more, and hear her forgiveness on her death-bed, forced

him to return to Malaga. He left Inez without farewell, but gave her all the money he possessed. He arrived at Malaga with the hope of seeing his wife. As he hurried to the door of his house he met her funeral procession leaving it. Broken-hearted, and a prey to the most bitter remorse, he could not again meet the woman who was the author of all this misery. He would not join his regiment which was in India, but exchanged into one which was in the West Indies, where, six months afterwards, he died. Inez now represented herself as his widow; the true facts were not known, and she soon won her way into the best society.

"She was popular both with men and women; but she had no certain means—no certain position in the world—but she soon found one.

"A very rich merchant—Mr. Sneyd—in the civil service, seemed just the man who

could give her wealth and influence. He was many years older than she was, and an invalid ; but he was very rich, and had one of the handsomest houses, and the best appointed establishments in Calcutta. He was a man much devoted to literature ; excessively fond of music, and possessing a very fine collection of pictures. On these two points he was vulnerable, and on these, did Inez work. She went by the name of Mrs. Hawkesley, and was considered as the widow of Captain Hawkesley, who was supposed to have deserted his young and beautiful wife, and whose death in the West Indies was considered as a judgment sent by Providence upon him.

“ She never met Mr. Sneyd in the gay circle in which she associated, and there seemed but little chance of making his acquaintance in the ordinary way. But she was too clever a politician to be daunted by any circum-

stances; no matter how disheartening they might appear. So she wrote him a note expressing her extreme anxiety to be allowed to copy one of his pictures—and throwing in a little judicious flattery. He immediately begged her to do him the honour of visiting his picture gallery—which invitation was of course accepted. She found some excuse for not copying the picture, I don't believe she had any idea of painting, but it served as an excuse to be on terms of intimacy with the man whom she intended to marry. But she begged to be allowed to try a pianoforte which stood in the gallery. She played and sang to him, as she can play and sing, and completely fascinated him. By degrees he became a constant visitor at her house, his horses and carriages were placed at her command, and in a few weeks he made her his wife. Now she appeared in her real character, and great was the transformation. Hitherto she

had been in his opinion an interesting, mourning widow, grieving over the memory of a cruel, heartless husband, caring little for society—and yearning with all the longing of an affectionate heart for some one to love her—and be loved by her.

“ Suddenly she came out in the most extravagant style ; his house was crowded with gay visitors ; balls, dejeuners, and musical parties succeeded each other in a manner that was misery to a man naturally fond of a quiet and sober life. She gave orders for a theatre to be fitted up, and in spite of her husband’s express commands, insisted on appearing on the boards. She possessed her mother’s talents and was one of the best amateur actresses in Calcutta, where there was then a rage for private theatricals ; her extravagance knew no bounds, and her husband in vain remonstrated with her on the matter. Her temper was terrible when roused—and her

husband preferred leaving her to her own course to encountering her violence, or what was even more aggravating, her contempt and utter indifference to his wishes and desires. She had three children, the two eldest were plain and uninteresting and she often alluded to their likeness to their father, with most insulting remarks on their appearance in his presence.

“The youngest was a beautiful child, and if there was one amiable or womanly spot in her hard heart, it was her love for this child. The others were totally neglected ; they were ignorant at the age of twelve or thirteen of the very existence of a God ; they were entirely left to the care of the native servants, and for days together their mother never saw them, and when they did meet her by chance she invariably desired them to keep out of sight, an injunction which they were only too glad to obey, as far as her society was con-

cerned. The youngest child was petted and spoiled, and became a perfect nuisance to everyone. Had she lived, probably she would have grown up as bad a woman as her mother ; but happily for herself, and for the world—she died of fever, and with her also died the last remaining points which were not all bad in her mother. For a while she shut herself up—and refused all comfort, all society ; but after a time this passed off—and she returned to her former extravagance, and recklessness with redoubled energy. Her feelings to the other children seemed more bitter than ever. She seemed to consider it as a special injury to herself that *they* should live, and be strong and healthy—while the child she loved was taken away.

“ This state of things went on—and her husband was an altered man. His once quiet and peaceful home, where he had been accustomed to assemble around him a few

men of literary tastes like his own, was now one scene of dissipation and gaiety. Twice a week his wife gave theatrical soirées, and the preparing for these occupied the other days. So there was neither peace nor quiet in the house. His own room was appropriated for a green-room. His valuable collection of stuffed birds, shells, geological curiosities, and a host of things valuable to him, were all bundled away in various parts of the house. His books were scattered about—every volume in a different place to every other volume. She had a mania for pets, not from any amiable love of animals, but because it was the correct thing to vie with other ladies as to the number and value of their live stock. The house was a perfect menagerie, parrots screamed in all corners, monkeys chattered and jabbered in all directions, and wherever the unfortunate husband put his foot, he either trod upon some pet dog, or injured some animal or other.

“ Was it wonderful that his home became odious to him ? He almost lived away from it, and in time there crept upon him that deadly, insidious foe, whose steps are so gradual, that the unhappy victim perceives not their advances—that awful vice which becomes the tyrant of the miserable being who yields to its fatal spell, and which ere long is resorted to, as an awful necessity—not so much from the pleasure it gives, as from the terrible craving it entails, when not yielded to. He took to drinking ; that debasing vice, which more than any other, degrades the human soul to the level of the brutes that perish, aye, immeasurably below their level, took possession of him. He, once so temperate, so despising the man who could lower himself thus, now sought to drown in the fatal bowl the unhappiness which he could not otherwise forget. He might be seen stealing to his home (alas ! how little that

happy word had to do with his wretched dwelling !) night after night, staggering, pale, lost to himself, lowered in his own eyes, conscious of the awful power that was on him—hating it, loathing it, but alas! beyond all possibility of shaking it off. One by one his friends avoided his society—warnings were useless—good advice thrown away. All this seemed to make no impression on his wife. They rarely met, each was going on their own downward way ; the paths were different, but they led to the same termination, and must meet at the same goal at last. Mrs. Sneyd felt—and rightly felt—that whatever her future conduct might be, her husband had no longer the right to remonstrate. How could a drunkard reason with or find fault with a wife ? She had never loved him—it had been one of those *mariages de convenance* which are but too frequent in India, but she had respected him; but now even that feeling was

gone. If she met him occasionally staggering up-stairs, she passed him with a shrug of the shoulders and a countenance expressive not of sorrow or pity, but of disgust and contempt. She never considered her share in this, or felt that her conduct had brought him so low. Which was the most guilty party, the wretched man himself or the wife who had driven him to it, is not for me to say.

“At last his health began to fail ; his medical man warned his wife that any moment an attack might carry him off ; but she believed, or pretended to believe, that the danger was exaggerated ; let us give her the benefit of the doubt. Her theatrical *soirées* still continued, and in the gay scene of her circle, none gave a thought to the unhappy man, who was hourly sinking, without a friendly hand to minister to him, or a friendly voice to speak a word to him. One night, when she had a gayer party than usual, when the sound of

revelry by night was even louder than usual, reaching to the ear of the sick man, who was neglected and deserted by the woman to whom he had given wealth and position, who had vowed at the altar to be with him in "sickness and in health," he sent a message to her, imploring her to dismiss the guests, and come to his room, as he felt so ill that he was fully persuaded that any more noise or music would bring on an attack.

"His wife sent a message to say that she was just going on the stage in a very important part of the play, which her absence would ruin. The message was given to him, and he made no answer, but lay back in his bed, and when some time afterwards, his wife hurried in, very much annoyed at the interruption, he was dead !

"There she stood in her theatrical costume, blazing with beauty, sparkling with jewels, face to face with the dead man, of whom,

morally speaking, she had been the murderer.

“Even among the giddy, thoughtless society in which she had moved, there was a strong feeling of indignation at such conduct. For a time she was under a cloud, but she endeavoured to persuade the world of her sorrow for her husband.

“She wore weeds of the most extra depth, (very handsome she looked in them too); she took a religious turn. There was then in Calcutta an ultra high-church party, who were glad of recruits; she joined them, and the world began to think that Mrs. Sneyd was really become religious.

“Those, however, who knew her best, merely said, ‘wait till she tires of this new phase.’ They had not long to wait. After a year she emerged from her weeds and her religious retirement simultaneously. She was as handsome as ever, and though now con-

siderably past thirty, she contrived to retain her juvenile appearance marvellously. Her rouge was not so plentifully put on as to defeat its object, and outdo nature; a *soupçon* of pearl powder, and a little artificial colour to her lips, and she would stand a comparison with any of the younger beauties around her. Her charms of manner no time could destroy; and when I first met her, I do not think a more fascinating or dangerous woman ever existed.

“When she had been a widow about eighteen months, her present husband, Captain Churchill, joined my regiment from the dépôt; a finer, handsomer fellow never breathed. When I contrast his appearance then, with the wreck that he now is, and know whose doing it has been, I could sentence that woman to any punishment. The very day after he arrived at Calcutta, his evil genius threw her in his path. He had

borrowed one of my horses (I wish to goodness the beast had broken its neck before he mounted it, and something might have prevented his meeting her). Soon after, he was returning from his ride, and near his own house, Mrs. Sneyd mounted on a fiery Arab (which she insisted on riding in opposition to advice) was carried past him at full speed. The horse had been frightened at something which it had met, and had rushed off with her. The groom had endeavoured to follow her, but his horse was unable to keep up with hers, and at a point where several roads branched off, he had taken the wrong one, and she was alone. Just as her horse passed Captain Churchill, she made a desperate effort to stop it, and, pulled it up so suddenly, that, rearing up frightfully, it fell back, and though she did not actually come under it, she narrowly escaped being crushed ; and falling with her head on a stone, she received a

fracture of the skull; and when Churchill lifted her up, she was apparently dead.

"Well had it been for him, poor fellow, had it been so! but she was his fate, and there was no escape for him. He knew nothing of her, she was thrown at his very door, there was nothing for it but to carry in to his house, what appeared to all who saw her a lifeless corpse. Medical aid was immediately procured; it was pronounced impossible to remove her; so there she remained. Churchill, who considered that she had been thrown in his way by Providence, was unremitting in his attentions. Could he have looked forward, he would have attributed the acquaintance to very different agency; but it was his *khismet*, and how could he escape from what was written for him in the decrees of fate? It was easy to guess how this would end.

"Beautiful, fascinating, with a special halo of interest thrown round her by the circum-

stances which had brought her before him, all Calcutta was prepared for the news which soon circulated through the public ear, that Mrs. Sneyd was again going to enlist under the banner of matrimony.

“ Of course, Captain Churchill having been so short a time in Calcutta, knew nothing of the antecedents of the woman with whom he was so desperately in love; but the public did all it could to inform him. Anonymous letters poured in upon him. He treated them with contempt. He read the first—showed it to Mrs. Sneyd, who shed floods of virtuous tears over the unjust remarks about her past life, did a good scene with considerable effect, of pretending to break off her engagement with him, as unwilling to marry any man who could believe such vile reports; and the affair ended by his considering her more perfect than ever, and the most ill-used angel on earth, and threw all the other letters into the fire.

"Well, they were married, and soon after left Calcutta for a distant station, and I heard no more of her; but in her husband's occasional letters to me I soon saw that he had found that his marriage with her had not brought him the happiness that he expected. One day he suddenly came to my house—I should hardly have known him—the last time I had seen him was on his wedding day, with his beautiful bride hanging on his arm, when he looked the very personification of happiness and manly beauty. He now came back looking haggard and miserable ; there seemed a dead weight on his spirits—he looked old and worn. He talked on indifferent matters at first, and even mentioned his wife's name ; but I saw that there was some *arrière pensée*, some painful subject which he could not bring himself to broach.

"At last he spoke out, and gave me such a history of his wife's conduct as I had never

dreamed of ; I believed her heartless, unprincipled, light in her conduct—but, no more—this was enough—and the boundaries between levity and guilt are not very clearly defined ; but now he laid before me all that he had discovered of her early life ; that the man who had brought her to India had not been her husband ; all the details of her treachery to his wife, and, in short, the whole revolting affair. A brother of Captain Hawkesley's, an old and valued friend of his own, who had been quartered with him at the station which he had just left, had revealed to him various circumstances which had roused his suspicions that his wife was the identical person, of whom he had long ago heard the Hawkesley family speak with such just indignation.

“ The whole affair had passed from his memory, but when link after link in the chain of evidence seemed to fit, he could no longer

doubt who and what the woman was whom he had made his wife. Still, it needed confirmation, and he determined to reveal his suspicions to her, and implore her either to silence them for ever by some convincing proof of her innocence, or to put an end to his suspense, which was quite as painful to bear as the worst confirmation. So he laid the whole affair before her, with a lingering hope that all might be false that was said against her. She did not attempt to deny it, and at last, roused to a state of fury by his reproaches, she defied him to take any legal step against her, as it had all happened before he had married her.

“ In this crisis of affairs he came to consult me ; but there was nothing to be done. She was quite right in her judgment, when she defied him to take any steps towards a divorce. She had remained behind, but very soon she arrived at Calcutta, and took a house for her-

self. Her husband immediately applied for a distant station, and did not see her again. She had a large income, both from the proceeds of her jointure and from the allowances which she received for the maintenance and education of Mr. Sneyd's children, but her extravagance far exceeded the ample limits of her means. Bills rained in upon her husband. She had a passion for jewellery, and also possessed a turn for play, both of them expensive tastes. She stood so low in the public estimation that but few women would visit her, but she was much run after by all the men, and she preferred their society to that of her own sex. She did not scruple to borrow large sums of money, or to accept magnificent presents.

"Many of the young men who were flattered by her apparent preference of them were totally ruined by her. At last a conclusion was put to all this. A young officer in my

own regiment (a cousin, by the bye, of your friend Fenham's), whom she had induced to lend her large sums of money, one day quitted her house in a state of violent excitement, rushed home, and shot himself, having first written a frantic letter, denouncing her in the most open terms as the cause of his death, having ruined him in pecuniary matters by denying all knowledge of a large sum of money which had been given into his care by a friend, and which he had lent her on her solemn promise to return it when his friend should require it. He had asked her for it, as the friend was to call for it that evening, and she had coolly ignored the whole affair; but this was not all. He said that in his desk would be found letters from her to him which would prove beyond all doubt facts which would enable her husband to obtain the divorce which otherwise he would not have succeeded in doing. The letter wound

up by a terrible summons to her to meet him in another world, and was altogether one of the most heart-rending and awful epistles I ever read. The poor boy was only about twenty, and I shall never forget the sight which I beheld, as he lay on the floor, which was covered with his blood.

"According to the Indian custom in such cases, I was called upon to undertake the settling of his affairs. His desk and all his papers were given into my hands. I found the letters to which he had alluded. I did not open them, but took them away with me till I should decide on what was to be done about them. The letter which the poor boy had written and had left on his table had been immediately given to me by one of his native servants, therefore I knew that the facts which it contained were known only to myself. Among his accounts was the date and memoranda of different sums lent to 'I. C.,'

which I could not doubt alluded to Mrs. Churchill.

"When I came to call in, and pay the various bills, I was astonished at the large sums which he owed for jewellery and other matters, which I felt sure must have been for presents for her.

"The evening of his funeral I was sitting alone puzzling over what I had best do about these letters. I knew that Churchill shrank from the publicity of a divorce; he had told me so. What use therefore in torturing him by showing him his wife's letters? While I was weighing over the matter in my mind, Mrs. Churchill was announced. She knew that I had been appointed, as the colonel of poor Maitland's regiment, to look over his papers, and she foresaw the consequences of my getting possession of these letters. She threw herself on her knees before me, wept,

implored, and besought of me to give her the letters. She made the most solemn vows of a change of life and conduct. These I knew her too well to regard with much interest, but it struck me that I might use my power over her, to insist on her doing what I knew her husband was most anxious to prevail on her to do.

“ He wished much that she should leave India, which she had positively refused to do. He thought that with many thousand miles between them, he should at all events be spared the pain of hearing of her mis-doings. So I told her that there was one only condition of my not giving the whole correspondence into her husband’s hand, and that condition was her leaving India within a month. She was much averse to it, but I told her I should give her twenty-four hours to make up her mind. I promised most solemnly not to make

use of her letters as regarded her past life, but thought it best not to give them to her, as I knew right well that once in her own possession she would destroy them, and laugh at me. So I sealed them up in her presence, and wrote on the envelope 'To be destroyed at my death.'

"You, my dear Reginald, as my heir and executor, will find them in my desk, and you will know what they are, and will burn them. I told her candidly, that if any circumstances for the future came to my knowledge that were disgraceful, then she must distinctly understand that my promise only referred to the past; at the same time I told her that my earnest wish was never to see or hear of her again. She left India soon after, and I heard no more of her till I came down here, when I was horrified to find that she was here, and that you—believing her to be a widow, and to be worthy of your affection

—were on the point of asking her to become your wife.

"I immediately called on her, and was grieved to find her thoroughly unaltered in disposition. I will not pain you, my dear boy, by repeating to you the heartless manner in which she spoke of you. But the day will come when *you* will rejoice—as much as *I* now do—that she did not love you, for if so she would have ruined you. The very day before I came here I had received a letter from Mr. Sneyd's brother, telling me that he had heard that a woman, who created an extraordinary sensation at Baden by her success at the gambling houses, was no other than Mrs. Churchill, though she did not bear that name, but passed as the wife of a foreigner, who was with her. During my interview with her I told her of these facts, and I saw at once that it was a 'true bill.' But I asked no more questions, and simply told Mr. Sneyd,

when I answered his letter, that I had not heard the facts to which he alluded, but at the same time advised him to remove his nieces from her care.

“And now, my dear boy!” said Sir Lionel, rising, feeling much relieved by having unburdened himself so satisfactorily of what had been pressing on his mind, and feeling convinced that he had fully “shown up” Mrs. Churchill, “*I have done my duty, now do yours.* Cast from your heart the very memory of such a woman, and rouse yourself to shake off this wretched depression which is unworthy of you. It is but the effort, and for God’s sake make it. A man doesn’t die for love. I have heard of women being such fools, though I don’t believe it. But if a man is to lose his life for a woman, it ought to be for one worth the sacrifice, and I think that I must have proved to you pretty plainly that

Mrs. Churchill is not that woman." So saying, he took his nephew's passive hand, pressed it kindly, and left him to digest the wretched history which he had told him.

CHAPTER V.

LONG did poor Reginald lie almost over-powered by the tale of shame and depravity which his very ears had tingled to hear. He felt that there was no exaggeration, no high colouring of statements. They were simple facts—facts enough to prove that he had thrown away, on an unworthy woman, all the great love of a first, passionate attachment. Was *this* the being whom his blind admiration and love had invested with all the charms of purity and excellence? Was it not the

“Very fiend’s arch mock?”

Oh! how he had been taken in! that was

the most galling thought; like most of his sex, he prided himself on his powers of discernment. Where were now those boasted powers? How she must have laughed at him! It was gall and wormwood to his proud, sensitive spirit. However, it was some consolation to think that he had not been the only fool—their name appeared to have been “legion.” When a man is in distress it is a great satisfaction to have others in the same “fix;” the feeling may not be a christian one, but it is a very natural one. When you go to your dentist you feel a grim, savage satisfaction to see the waiting room full of other victims, and possibly your feelings almost amount to a pleasure, when you discover that some of these are looking to the process of extraction, while *your* happy lot (for everything in this world goes by comparison) may only go as far as the minor miseries of “filing,” “stopping,” etc.

If I am to "come to grief," I should like to have plenty of acquaintance in the same happy condition. I don't think it would be half so bad as suffering alone; society is an advantage in any circumstances.

The great matter of thankfulness in Reginald's heart was that she was not free; there was a wretched husband who had saved *him* from the fate of making her his wife. However he himself suffered—that miserable man was more to be pitied. Better not to have what we wish for and love, than to be inseparably tied to what we hate and despise! But though he felt all this it was none the easier at once to cast out the image that had taken such firm hold of his affections.

Anything that has taken root in our heart is hard to dislodge, even though it be an unworthy object. Even a weed which has twined round our affections and has struck its fibres into our heart, is difficult to uproot,

aye, more difficult to destroy than a flower might be. It is a weed, noxious, poisonous, perhaps, but it has roots; and those roots have taken firm hold, and have struck deep; and oh! what a process must be gone through before the last minute atom is finally dug up and removed. And how long it will be before that heart will recover those wounds, and before the soil will be able to nourish even the fairest flower that may wish to grow there.

Reginald made all sorts of resolutions, as most people do in his condition, never to fall into the same snare again. He would never love again—never trust again. All women (he was kind and charitable enough to declare) were the same.

“Yes,” he said, bitterly, “I have learned my first lesson in worldly wisdom; it shall not be lost upon me. There was a time when I stood up a champion for women, and defended them. Henceforth I shall join in the

cry against them ; I have no alternative but to subscribe to the old worldly opinion that women are alike ; virtuous till they are tempted, and then all alike bad. Every woman has her price if you bid high enough ; and those who are what they ought to be, are only so because no one has yet bid their price. I wash my hands of them henceforth ! ”

But while thus mentally performing his ablutions, he was guilty of a glaring inconsistency. He washed his hands of the sex in general—but all the while he did not cast from his heart the person in particular who had caused all his trouble. He still thought of her, not as he had once thought of her, but still she occupied a large share of his memory. There seemed little chance of dislodging the enemy unless some other individual could take her place, and unless a new love could drive out the old one.

Sir Lionel was disappointed in the result of his disclosures. He had expected to find Reginald at once a different person ; had fancied that health, and appetite, and energy would come exactly at the desired moment. He was, therefore, grievously disappointed to find that several days passed on, and still no material improvement took place in his nephew. So he determined to consult Dr. Gulson, and requested him to call—ostensibly to see Mrs. Douglas—but really to give his opinion on Reginald.

His mother had confided to this kind friend many of the facts relating to her son's illness, which had elicited from him his confirmed opinion that there's always a woman at the bottom of every mischief. After he had talked a little with Reginald, he then had his interview with Mrs. Douglas and Sir Lionel.

" You must get him away from this place,"

said the Doctor, decidedly; "there are symptoms about him which I do not like. He must spend what remains of the winter abroad. He is still suffering from the shock to his best affections, and his mental health is not likely to improve here." 'Who can minister to a mind diseased!' I can do nothing there, but we must not forget that he has had physical illness also to contend with. A man does not die of love, but he may die of consumption, or of neglected symptoms of disease, which, taken in time, may be nothing. I should urge his going to the south of France immediately."

"But, my dear Dr. Gulson," said his mother, "how are we to get him to consent to go?"

"I think I can manage it," said the Doctor, after a pause. "You, my dear Mrs. Douglas, are not well; change of climate

will benefit you also. So I shall tell your son that he must join his entreaties with mine to persuade you to go abroad. Now don't be too easily persuaded, and if he seems anxious about your health, don't spoil our plans by declaring that you are perfectly well. Remember that the more you allow him to be alarmed about you, the more desirous he will be to go where we wish him to go."

So the doctor repaired to the drawing-room, where Reginald was lying on the sofa, looking ill and depressed.

"My dear Captain Douglas," said he; "I wish to speak to you about your mother's health."

The look of indifference to everything and everybody, so habitual to Reginald, disappeared from his face in a moment.

The doctor had touched the only string that was not broken and out of tune; it struck

true and home to his heart—his mother; *that* chord vibrated still, when all the others seemed silent for ever.

“I think it highly desirable,” continued the doctor; “*that* your mother should proceed at once abroad. I should strongly recommend her spending what yet remains of the winter and the spring at Nice. I am sure that I may count on your using your utmost endeavours to persuade her to go.”

“Certainly,” said Reginald; “I can answer for my mother’s doing anything that I ask her, and I hope that I shall be able to get leave to accompany her.”

“You *must* get leave,” said the doctor; “if you do not accompany her, there is no use in her going.”

So that evening, Reginald used all his power to persuade his mother to leave England as soon as preparations could be made, and went so far as to say :

"Really, mother, you must go for my sake. I know how you hate the idea; but try and fancy that you are going abroad for my health; indeed, I rather wonder that Dr. Gulson didn't lay it on my health instead of yours. I'm sure he poked my unfortunate chest about, and took out his confounded stethescope, and sounded me as if he thought that I was going into consumption. I'm sure Nice is the very place for me; so if you object to go on your own account—I shall have to go there all alone, and if I die out there by myself, with no one to nurse me, you'll never forgive yourself—so now do give in and say that you'll start this day fortnight."

So she gave in, feeling rather ashamed of her deception—innocent as it was. But she showed herself a perfect mistress in diplomacy, and pretended to find a thousand difficulties as to the route—and many other matters; all

of which Reginald overruled most satisfactorily, and next morning sent for a foreign Bradshawe, and traced out the whole route; the hotels where they should sleep, and even almost ordered the dinners which they should have at each place.

He much amused his uncle by his fears that his mother should resist at the last.

"I never knew my mother so obstinate," said he, gazing into the fire, and amusing himself by breaking the coals into the smallest atoms possible. "I only trust that she won't cry off at the last moment."

"You must keep her up to it," said his uncle, solemnly; though he was scarcely able to help laughing at his nephew's serious face, "and put it on your health."

So matters were arranged, and Reginald got six months' leave on medical certificate.

CHAPTER VI.

MRS. DOUGLAS was of course extremely anxious that her brother should accompany her abroad. She had some terror hanging over her that they might meet Mrs. Churchill again, in some of their wanderings; and who could tell what the effect might be on Reginald if he met her again? His love might be rekindled; possibly "the snake was only scotched not killed," it might wake again after its temporary slumber—and sting still more fatally the heart which thought it destroyed for ever. A relapse in love might be as fatal as a

relapse in bodily illness, more difficult to cure than the original ailment.

But Sir Lionel was firm in his refusal; he saw that all would be right as soon as his nephew was forced to exertion; and *he* could do nothing if he again met Mrs. Churchill; he had told him all he knew; if after those facts he could again love such a woman, he was past all hope. Not that he for one moment thought of such a thing as possible; therefore he declined accompanying his sister and her son.

There were all sorts of reasons for his wishing to remain in England this winter. He had never been so free from gout for years—he was a stone lighter than last year (thanks to a series of Turkish baths), therefore, in first-rate condition for hunting; then his hunting establishment was in first-rate order, his horses looking splendid; the new master of hounds in the country where he hunted

had made arrangements for two more days a fortnight than his predecessor had ever done ; in fact, this old Nimrod determined that go abroad he would not. Why should he go and be poisoned with abominable French cookery, when there was plenty of good wholesome roast beef in old England ? He was not partial to frogs ; and how could he be quite sure that he was not eating them in some form or other ? Go, he wouldn't, so it was only time and breath wasted in trying to persuade him.

So Mrs. Douglas cast in her mind who she should get as a third person, thinking that Reginald would be all the better for a companion. So after much deliberation, it suddenly struck her that no other person could be more suitable than a daughter of a distant relation of her own, whom she had never seen, but whose mother, now dead many years ago, had been one of her dearest

friends. If Letitia Mostyn was like her mother, no more charming companion could she have. She even went so far as to fancy that *she* might be the person who would drive Mrs. Churchill's memory from her son's heart. She knew that she was older, but she did not know how much. There had been several daughters, but they were all dead, except Letitia, and she did not know whereabouts she had come in. So she sat down and wrote a most kind letter to her unknown cousin, telling her that she and Reginald were going to Nice, and begged her to obtain her father's permission to accompany them, and requested her to join them at Malvern as soon as she could leave Lincolnshire, in which unpleasant, fenny county of England, her father's excellent living was situated.

A letter, accepting the invitation with great pleasure, arrived by return of post, and in two or three days Miss Letitia Mostyn,

accompanied by her maid, a subdued-looking young person, presented herself with an awful quantity of the largest boxes and trunks, and an innumerable quantity of bags and parcels.

Reginald, who surveyed the removal of these from the "fly" to the hall, uttered a mental thanksgiving that the proprietress of all these valuables had brought her own maid to look after them all.

"Thank goodness," he exclaimed, "that one is not expected to show any civility to one's consins. I don't mean to put myself the least out of the way for her. I shan't give her up the arm-chair, or do anything civil to her. I am an invalid, that's a blessing in this case, and will be my excuse if I am rude. She is a woman, and that's quite enough to make me dislike her."

So he avoided going down stairs till the very last moment, when the dinner bell had rung.

CHAPTER VII.

MAY I have the pleasure, kind reader, of introducing to you Miss Letitia Mostyn. Well, how shall I describe her? To begin with her age. Well, she was one of those persons who might be any age. If you were told that she was thirty you would not be surprised; and if immediately afterwards some one asserted that she was fifty, you would equally believe them. *I* happen to have seen the register, so can breathe into your ear, on a solemn promise that it shall go no further, that she was just thirty-six. She

herself professed a profound ignorance of her age. She had never kept or remembered a birthday since she was five-and twenty, so possibly fancied that she was still at that period of life. She was tall, and truth forces us to say, stout ; it is a humiliating fact to record of a lady, but stout she was. The ambition of her life had been to be slight, a small waist was her idea of perfect happiness, and great and praiseworthy had been her exertions to become

“Small by degrees, and beautifully less.”

But alas, she had only grew all the stouter. She walked, she fasted, she took Turkish baths ; but it was all in vain ; it was written that she should be stout, and who can alter the decrees of fate ?

Had she been describing her own style, she would have called herself “blonde,” any one else would have said “yellow.” She was pale, and I must add freckled ; her face represented

the appearance of a large turkey's egg, and there was a legend current in the family that a fairy had one day thrown a plate full of bran at her face, and that all the soap and water in Great Britain could not remove it. Her hair, face, and even her eyes were all much of the same hue, and with intense perverseness she generally adopted a style of dress extremely unbecoming to such a complexion, and attired herself in some neutral tint, very much of the same shade as she herself was. In summer she generally wore a brown holland dress, and a jacket of the same, tied round the waist. This, with a drab coloured straw hat, gave her the appearance of a huge brown paper parcel. Happily it was not now the season for brown holland, so her new relations were spared this shock to their feelings. But the first Sunday that she appeared dressed for church, got up in an entire suit of the fashionable "cuir" colour-

dress, mantle, bonnet, gloves, and prayer book, Reginald declared that he thought it was a huge quarto volume bound in Russia leather, which had by some accident tumbled out of some library shelf, and was wandering about like a troubled spirit, looking for its next volume. There was a monotony in her whole appearance, you always looked for a little bit of colour, and would have hailed with pleasure something to break the dull sameness of her countenance and her dress. Her mind was quite in keeping with "her outer woman." She was one of those provoking people who take everything "au pied de la lettre," had not the least imagination, and never could see anything except in the straightforward line of march. She must have been the nearest relative in the female line, to the man of whom we are told

"A primrose by the river's brim
A yellow primrose was to him,
But it was nothing more."

One of those tiresomely matter of fact persons, who are most provoking, who never can understand or see a joke, or a “jeu de mots,” till it has been explained and gone over in all its parts, and even then, very often see nothing in it. She had not one particle of romance in her whole system, none of those finely organised feelings and sympathies which are so necessary to make the springs and wheels of social life run smoothly and pleasantly. It was a continued jar on your nerves to be with her, she set you continually on edge, irritated you, made you feel all over funny bones, and as if all these funny bones were knocked against the edge of the table at once.

She was not unamiable—she was not a fool, she was not vulgar, she was not uneducated, and yet she was a failure, and why? She was one of those unfortunate persons from whom Nature had withheld her choicest gift,

that gift without which all her others are useless, that golden thread which runs through the web of life, that magic spring which acts as an "open sesame" to all hearts. It is a little word, it can boast but of one syllable, and four letters, but match me that word in the whole alphabet. She was utterly devoid of "tact." Oh, what a terrible unkindness had Nature done her, a blank which could not be filled up afterwards. It must be born in us, for no grafting process can succeed with it. It cannot be taught, and I know of no shop where it can be procured. "It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof."

The want of this priceless article caused Letitia Mostyn to be a failure. She was one of those unlucky persons who always manage to stumble on the very subject of all others to be avoided. If there was something which everybody wished not mentioned, she was

sure to begin upon it. Some people have an intuitive feeling, that tells them what matters are painful or disagreeable to others, and a delicacy that leads them to avoid the subject, but poor Letitia was eternally floundering into some forbidden topic. She was a very well-meaning person, and will you tell me what class of people are so odious—and do so much mischief? For my own part I abominate well-meaning persons. All the mischief they do, is with some innocent design; therefore, you have not the satisfaction of paying them off—and they are generally so provokingly penitent that you are obliged to forgive them—though you know that the same thing will happen again. Preserve *me* from a well-meaning person!

After this description of “Cousin Letitia,” my reader will not envy Reginald and his mother the pleasure of having her as a constant companion for some months—without any

chance or hope of getting rid of her till they returned to England—Reginald took a dislike to her the moment he saw her. She was so different to what his last female acquaintance had been—that in his own mind he was eternally contrasting her with Mrs. Churchill. “And yet,” he added bitterly, “This woman, unpleasing, disagreeable as she is—devoid of charms either of body or mind, is ten times more worthy of my esteem—my respect—than the other. If she has not her beauty, her fascination; neither has she her vices, her crimes, and yet why shouldn’t she? I will never answer for a woman again. If she is not all that others are—no doubt it is that she has never been tried. I am sure she has been spared the temptation of beauty—and perhaps plain and disagreeable as she is—she may be really as bad; how can one tell who are pure and virtuous? Women are so deceitful and have such wonderful powers

of self-control, that very likely my Cousin Letitia, who looks as if nothing more important than the dropping of a stitch in her knitting had ever occurred during her whole life, may be privately married to the gardener or the groom, and may have some guilty secret on that apparently empty mind."

Mrs. Douglas had heard much of Letitia's musical powers, and hoped that in this point she might gain Reginald's favour, in which she soon saw she stood very low. Her voice was fine, and she had been well taught, but her singing was most unpleasing. Not the slightest expression characterised it, if it was a melancholy dirge or a buffo song, it was all the same to her. She sang in tune, but never pleased your ear, or spoke to your heart; it was purely mechanical, all taught, nothing spontaneous. Here again Reginald contrasted her music with Mrs. Churchill's soul stirring strains; could he ever forget her delicious

thrilling voice, which seemed to enter into the spirit of everything that she sang. That voice still echoed through the inmost recesses of his soul, and haunted him even yet. Oh, how difficult it was to forget !

Letitia had one or two habits which were extremely annoying to Reginald, who was occasionally excessively irritable ; she kept a journal, and every evening after tea, this ponderous book was brought out, and she wrote till bed-time. It was secured with a lock and key, so it was hopeless to try and take a sly peep into it. She always wrote with a very scratchy steel pen, such as David Copperfield's child-wife called a "talking pen," and it was a perfect penance to Reginald, whose sense of hearing had that painful acuteness which can only be realized by those who have suffered from brain fever—to hear this scratching going on night after night; and though it was only a trifle

in itself, still it was the “roseleaf that made the brimming cup o'erflow,” and the last straw that broke the camel’s back; and these little annoyances worried Reginald and made him feel quite unchristian to his unconsciously offending relative.

As for Letitia herself, she was one of those fortunate individuals, who seem to have been made without nerves, and nothing ever put her on edge, or irritated her. If you played an air in flats on the piano with one hand, and in sharps with the other, she never seemed jarred all over, or never felt something running up her back bone from the discord. You might hold up a scarlet ribbon and a magenta ditto before her, without setting her teeth on edge, or making her uncomfortable. In fact, she was just the person to go through the world, with extreme comfort to herself, without feeling any of the little annoyances which are almost misfortunes to the sensitive. She

was scarcely the sort of individual to suit an invalid, still suffering from severe mental and bodily ailments ; but still she was on the whole of advantage to Reginald. Some medicines are sedative, others are irritants, and each has its use. Reginald was in a typhoid state of mind, and required an irritant, and Letitia had quite the effect of rousing him, for he was snapping at her all day. His mother was sometimes quite uncomfortable at his rudeness.

“ Goodness me, mother,” he said, one day, when she had been remonstrating with him. “ She hasn’t the slightest idea that I mean her when I say those things. I never saw so obtuse a person—that’s what provokes me more than anything else.”

“ Then if it is all lost on her, what is the pleasure of saying those things ? ” said Mrs. Douglas.

“ Because I cannot help it. I never felt so

unchristian in my life as I do now. The moment she comes into the room I feel an east wind all over me. I strongly suspect that she is the east wind in petticoats. I shall christen her ‘Eola,’ as the feminine of ‘Eolus.’” I tell you what, mother, we have made an awful mistake.”

“How so?” said his mother innocently, though she knew well what he meant, for she had her misgivings about Letitia, very soon after she arrived, and looked forward with anything but pleasure to several months of her society.

“Now don’t look so innocent, as if you were not awfully bored already with our fair Eola’s society. I did think that my mother might be the only one of whom I might say with the poet

“Tho’ woman thou didst not deceive me.”

but I see you are like your sex—no, I won’t
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listen to a word, till you confess that you dislike Letitia extremely. I won't make you say hate, because she isn't worth being hated. I never knew anyone with so little idea that she can ever be in the way as she has. Some people have the knack of always coming into the room at the exact time that you want them to stay away. Yes—there she is rustling down the stairs, and will be in upon us in a moment. By-the-bye, mother, do tell me what she is always prowling about the room, with that stealthy step, for?"

"Perhaps looking for something or other," suggested his mother, laughing.

"Why doesn't she ask for it then? If there is a thing I hate, it is a stiff, rustling silk dress trying to steal about the room without making a noise. The other evening I was half asleep, and I found her standing by me, and she rushed off in such a hurry; I don't know

whether she intended to garotte me, or to kiss me, but I am not ambitious of either operations, if *she* is to carry them out."

Here the entrance of Letitia herself put an end to the conversation, but Mrs. Douglas could not deny to herself the truth of her son's charges against her. The most annoying of her peculiarities he had not mentioned, which was this, that her petticoat and crinoline were of such vast and enormous proportions, that she never by any chance went near the fire-place that she did not carry off in her numerous flounces, or ruches, the poker, tongs, and shovel with an awful clatter. This occurred a dozen times a day, but never distressed her, though it made Reginald's delicate nerves thrill all over. Then again her dresses were so long that he was tumbling over them all day, and dragging out the gathers, but it only brought the usual remark—“oh, it doesn't matter the least,” and the poor

depressed maid was summoned to repair the damages. If she had not possessed a maid, Reginald felt that he would have had the most savage pleasure in tearing her dress ten times as often, but as it neither annoyed her, nor gave her trouble, he avoided a good deal of mischief, which he would not otherwise have done, in pity to the depressed maid's fingers.

Miss Mostyn had arrived at that period of a woman's life when she becomes very bitter against the other sex.

Now really she had no particular reasons for this, for no man had ever deceived her. And yet, to hear her hold forth upon the falsehood, the villainy of all mankind ; you would have fancied that she had been wounded in the most merciless manner, and that her best affections had been trampled upon, torn into shreds, and outraged in the most inhuman manner. And yet, the only crime that she

could personally accuse mankind of, was their utter neutrality towards herself. She presented to the world, the singular fact of a woman, who had never had a lover!

Very few there are who have not had some little dream—unrealised possibly, but not the less real; some little corner still sore, in an otherwise contented heart. Every woman has had some little affair, which never came to anything, but, they can lay the flattering unction to their souls, would have come to something, had not some unkind fate prevented it. There is hardly a heart that beats that has not found some heart to beat (at least for a time), in unison with its own—

“No one is so accurs'd by fate,
No one is so utterly desolate.
But some heart, though unknown,
Responds unto its own.”

But poor Miss Mostyn was an exception to this rule. Certainly she had not been much in society, and had but few acquaintances

among the male part of the population of the town, where she lived. Still her father had two curates, and what more natural than that these individuals should fall in love with the rector's daughter? There was plenty of opportunity, had any of them been so disposed. What advantages did the school present, such confidences as might be entered into, over the moral and intellectual capabilities of each child; then the school feasts—what opportunities over the cake, and bread and butter what? arranging the decorations of the village school-room!

But alas! all these advantages never produced any effect. Miss Mostyn cut bread and butter, poured out tea; and the curates sugared and milked the same, and handed the viands prepared by her fair hands—but never got the length of asking her to sweeten the cup of life for them, or to sit by their firesides and preside over *their* bread and butter!

This seemed strange, but so it was, though her acquaintance with the junior members of the ecclesiastical world was very extensive, for either Mr. Mostyn did not like his curates, or they did not like him; but it was a constant scene of change. Each fresh gentleman that appeared in the office, was "given" to Letitia, by that class of society, who never can imagine a single man and a single woman being in the same town or county, without falling in love with each other; but still Miss Mostyn remained unappropriated, and was fast approaching that terrible and hopeless condition of life, which condemns our unhappy sex to bear the opprobrious name of "old maid," a term that seems to combine in its seven letters, all that the world has of appalling to the female sex.

No doubt the condition of a woman who has "none to love her, none whom she can love," is not a pleasant one. If the term "old

"maid" means all this, but why should it mean it? If a woman had been pleasant and popular as a "young maid"—why should she cease to be so, because she is an "old maid"? Of course she must not look for popularity in the same quarter, and if she has had the misfortune to have been a beauty, and has lost all but the memory of that beauty, then it is a very poor look out for herself, and her friends. But otherwise, old maids may be as happy, and as popular as they were in their *première jeunesse*. I own I should not like the "cat" which seems the *sine quâ non* of the class, but substitute a good comfortable companionable dog, and I see no hardship in the lot, and cheerfully enrol my name in this despised class, and enlist myself under their banner.

Poor Miss Mostyn had no greater terror in life than the idea of never marrying. I do not think that she could have given any reason for this. She had no intense longings to love or

to be loved, such as are born in almost every woman's heart, and are part of her existence, those feelings which are so hard to stifle, and which probably never are stifled, though they may be so hidden, so concealed in the inmost depths of her being, as to be unsuspected by any.

Such ideas as these were unknown to Letitia. She had never felt a yearning for sympathy—a longing for some second self, who would rejoice with her, suffer with her, whose joys she might heighten, whose sorrows she might soothe, and whose happiness would be the one thought of her life. Nothing of this entered into her mind, and if her longings for matrimony could have been analysed, I really think that they would have resolved themselves into having a “Mrs.” before her name, instead of a “Miss,” and of being able to exhibit to the world, a plain gold ring.

No doubt she would have made an excel-

lent wife—in the common interpretation of the word. She would never have been jealous ; she would have allowed her husband to have a latch key—wouldn't have peeped into his letters—and oh ! greatest boon of all—would have looked after his shirt buttons, that most terrible trial of mankind ; a curse, which in conjunction with razors and all their aggravations, is the only misery which the female part of human nature is spared.

Yes ! women have their trials, and their burdens ; but as yet, they have neither shirt buttons nor razors. How long this happy state will exist—it would be presumptuous in me to pronounce. We are so quickly donning most of the articles worn by men, that I almost fear we must soon come to shirt buttons and razors ; and when that happens, the sooner we order our coffins the better, for life will then be quite intolerable.

I feel that I am justified in saying that

Miss Mostyn would have very thoroughly attended to her husband's shirt buttons. She looked like a woman that would, and it was almost a pity that no one had as yet given her an opportunity of bringing this talent into play. She had hailed with delight the idea of going abroad. Two of her friends had met their husbands on the continent; why should not *she*? I rather fear that her hopes were not destined to be realized.

CHAPTER VIII.

AT last the day arrived for the party to leave Malvern *en route* to Nice. It was a lovely morning—a sort of day that you feel sorry to leave any place, especially a place to which either painful or pleasant interests have bound you. Now, for the first time, both Mrs. Douglas and Reginald learned how very disagreeable Letitia would be as a travelling companion ; Such a fuss as she had been in since day-break, about her luggage—such a quantity as she had of it too ! Reginald chuckled to think how she would have to pay for it on

the foreign railways. Then, she was never in time, and both her *compagnons de voyage* had been seated some time in the fly before she appeared. Half-way down to the station she discovered that one parcel was missing. In vain Mrs. Douglas suggested the possibility of its being in the other fly, in which the two Abigails and Jenkyns were following. She must make sure of this fact; so both flys were stopped, and everybody was obliged to get out, after which, the depressed maid succeeded in convincing her mistress that she had desired the parcel in question to be put into one of the trunks. Order was restored, and the party proceeded to the station, Reginald wishing very much that they might have the luck to lose *her* before they arrived at their journey's end! The sight of the station recalled his first arrival at Malvern; how well he recollects fetching a glass of water from the refreshment room for Mrs.

Churchill, and going into the waiting-room with her to tie up her enormous bouquet ; all these little trifles came back bitterly to his memory. Then he was coming to Malvern, happy, light-hearted, full of health and spirits—without a single cloud over his heart, or in his sky. Now, he was leaving it, sad, dispirited, broken in health, and with a deep melancholy in his heart, that nothing would dispel.

The journey was a painful one ; but his mother hoped much from change of scene ; the lovely climate to which they were bound, would improve his health ; and with health, she trusted that his spirits would be benefited. Dr. Gulson had given particular instructions to him to insist on his mother's going out as much as possible into any society that might offer itself. " Above all," he said, " do make your mother dine at the different *tables-d'hôtes*, and don't allow her to remain in her own

private sitting-room for her meals." By this stroke of policy, he gave Reginald an opportunity of making acquaintances; otherwise his mother feared that he would shun society, and shut himself up, and thereby lose the advantages which she anticipated. He was so devoted to his mother, that he would have done anything for her benefit, though he was not a little puzzled at the new line struck out for her. He began to think that the doctor saw symptoms of some morbid mania, which threatened insanity, to avert which calamity, it was necessary to keep her constantly amused and excited!

Their journey to Paris was marked by no particular fact, except by their missing a train, in consequence of Letitia's vowing that part of her baggage had been lost, and after a great search the missing box was discovered safely stowed away in the omnibus which was to take them to the station. At Paris they

intended to remain three or four days, and took rooms at the Hotel du Louvre.

Next morning Reginald started off for a stroll, having with difficulty escaped the pleasure of his cousin's society ; but he slipped out of the room, and when she appeared, after a very elaborate *toilette*, she found that he had "stolen away," so she was obliged to put up with the society of her maid, who, on her part, would have much preferred a walk with the other servants, who were just going to take their first sight of Paris, and its wonders. Reginald was returning from his walk, when he stopped before a jeweller's shop, to admire a brilliant display of ornaments. As he stood there, two people attracted by the same objects, came and looked in at the window. He did not turn to look at them, but the lady spoke. The voice was one which he had not *yet* forgotten, and it thrilled to his inmost soul.

"Oh! Karl," she said, "I must have that diamond ring, do ask what the price is."

Reginald felt that he could not bear her presence another minute, so summoning up all his strength to appear calm and unconcerned, he slowly turned, and looked her full in the face; and oh, what a look it was, contempt, withering contempt was its chief feature—such a look she had never seen on that face before, and even *she* looked abashed for a moment. But her sang-froid returned, and with her sweetest smile she held out her hand. But he appeared not to notice it, and drawing back a step, he very politely and gracefully lifted his hat to her, and with the same expression of utter contempt on his countenance, turned on his heel and walked away. But she had a shaft to send after him.

With a light careless laugh she said to her

companion, "What a bear a man becomes when he is jealous?"

Reginald, agitated and miserable, yet satisfied that he had shown her what his opinion now was of her, rushed home to the hotel ; his mother was alone. One look at his face told her what had happened, there was but one being on earth, whose presence could have such an effect on him.

"Mother," he said in a hurried voice, "can we leave Paris by the earliest train ?"

"Certainly," said his mother, "the sooner we leave the better ; the cold is intense, and I long for the bright sunshine."

"I have seen her again," he said, "and the very air of this place is odious to me. I feel as if I had met a serpent; but a beautiful as well as a dangerous serpent, let us go as soon as possible, for I dread meeting her again. I cannot answer for myself if I meet her."

So all preparations were made for leaving next morning. Great was Miss Mostyn's agony of mind at this sudden change of plans. She had paid a visit to Barrenne, and had seen such exquisite things. She had not taken enough money with her to buy half what she wished for (one wants a good long purse at the Magasin of Barrenne), and she had promised to go there next day. However, Mrs. Douglas thought that her son's peace of mind was of more importance than Letitia's fancies, or Barrenne's disappointment, so they all left Paris by the early train next morning. Two hours afterwards, a note was brought by Mrs. Churchill's maid to the Louvre Hotel, with a heart-rending agonised entreaty to Reginald, to come to her and hear all that she had gone through, since the cruel moment that she had been forced to part from him. Happily for him, he was for ever beyond the reach of her dangerous fascinations. Had he

not been beyond it, would he have resisted her appeal? Would he once more have fallen in the net?

Is the “net always spread in vain in the sight of the bird?”

CHAPTER IX.

THOSE who have travelled in mid-winter through cold, snow, and a vast tract of land resembling an enormous wedding cake, in which any features it may possess, are entirely hidden by the white pall spread over it, can alone appreciate the delight of finding themselves all at once transported into sunshine and beauty, where the flowers are blooming as in summer, where all is gaiety, pleasure, and excitement. Such are the sensations which take possession of you at Nice; the very air you breathe inspires you

with new life and health; the very sense of living is, in itself an enjoyment (not the weariness which it occasionally is in our cold foggy England) when you appear to have left all your torments behind you, and enjoy the sensation of a continual Champagne feast, without its penalty of head-aches, and its after-yearnings for soda-water. Such are the delights of this charming spot. The never-ebbing Mediterranean rolling before you, blue as the azure skies, from which it takes its reflected hue, the distant hills with an occasional tip of snow, and which, at certain hours glow with the most vivid rose colour, when either the rising or setting sun throws its rays upon them ; the clumps of dark olive trees contrasted with the brilliant green of the caroub tree, or the stone pine ; all these form a combination of beauty very delightful. This is its bright side, alas ! it has a dark side too. What is there bright on earth, that has not ?

There is a burial ground filled with the graves of the loved, and fair, and young, whom a last forlorn hope has led to seek, in that lovely climate a respite from the stern sentence of death. Their graves are wreathed around with many a lovely flower ; roses twine round the stone that marks their last resting place ; violets spring from the earth which covers them, and their requiem is sung eternally by the cypress trees that wave above them ; but all these cannot hide the fact, that it is the abode of death, the spot where love and sorrow have committed to the earth all that was mortal of the loved and young. And sad it is to number the years of those who, after but a short sojourn on earth, whose feet have scarcely begun to tread the paths of life, and who have scarcely put on their armour to fight its battle, have sunk beneath the relentless hand of the great destroyer.

Very lovely is the first glimpse of this ex-

quisite spot, which may truly be described as "*un pezzo di cielo, caduto in terra*"—as it lies nestling along the bay, with the snowy towers of the white light-house, contrasting with the vivid blue of the sea. Very strange is the effect produced by the enormous display of linen laid out to dry all along the beach. The unromantic would describe it as a vast bleaching ground, but happily this operation does not take place every day. The wretched clothes have first to be washed in the little streams which flow from the place where the Paglione falls into the sea, and a terrible castigation they receive from the wooden bats which are employed to beat the dirt out of them.

You may imagine how advantageous such a system is, to the constitutions of your clothes, and to the physical well-being of your shirt-buttons?

Occasionally when the snow melts into the

mountain streams the Paglione, is so suddenly swollen, and rushes down so quickly, that it carries with it all the linen that is being washed; and once was known to engulf a wretched washerwoman, who was only saved from a watery grave by some brave individual jumping in and dragging her out.

The first impressions of Nice were not taken in by our travellers till the morning after they arrived, as they reached it so late, that night had spread her veil over everything. But next day what a glorious flood of sunshine poured into Reginald's room, when his servant opened the windows! They had taken rooms at the Hotel de la Grande Bretagne, and had a view across the square dignified by the title of the "jardin public," on to the sea. How lovely it looked when Reginald threw open his window and gazed with the first feeling of pleasure which he had known since his illness—on the sparkling,

crystal waves, chasing each other in endless succession across the blue depth. There were plenty of people out taking the air already, and Reginald determined that another morning should see him out there too. The day was passed by him in strolling about, and great was his mother's delight, when two or three hours before the usual time of the table d'hote, he declared himself so ravenous that he must have some biscuits to appease his hunger. Already the change had begun to work. Miss Mostyn, with her usual tact, congratulated him on the improvement in his appetite, which had, of course, the effect of making him eat much less than he would have done if his performance had been unnoticed

Mrs. Douglas would have forgiven him if he had thrown the plate and his contents at Letitia's head, she was so provoked at her.

That evening they dined at the table d'hote

and met a large party. Among the English present were an elderly gentlemanly-looking man, with a handsome wife, and such a pretty daughter about eighteen. She sat next Reginald, but he never even looked at her, and I must say looked very cross, not to say sulky, during the whole dinner.

“What a lovely girl that was who sat next you, Reginald,” said his mother when they had all retired to their private salon.

“I never looked at her,” said he ; “women are henceforth a dead letter to me, and I think nothing of their beauty or the reverse. The young lady seemed very talkative and rather pert I thought.”

“Pert,” said Mrs. Douglas ; “how can you say so ?”

“Well, mother, I may have mistaken her, and it is of such little consequence.”

Next morning after breakfast Mrs. Douglas
G 2

announced her intention of writing some letters. Miss Mostyn took the depressed maid with her, and set off to "look up" the shops; she wanted a new crinoline and *several* bonnets, so had a most delightful morning before her.

Reginald determined to explore a little of the town, so he passed along the "Quai Massena," not forgetting to buy a bouquet of violets from one of the children who abound there with baskets of such delicious Neapolitan violets which fill the whole air with their fragrance. He crossed the bridge and passed down the Rue Pont-neuf. He was engaged in looking at some of the inlaid wood-work which is the "*spécialité*" of Nice, when suddenly he received a "dig in the ribs" which nearly sent him through the shop window, and a hearty pleasant voice called out in stentorian tones—

"There isn't a fellow in the British army with such a back to his head, but Reginald Douglas?"

"And there isn't a fellow in the British army that could give another fellow such a blow, and not get knocked down for his pains but Harry Fenham," said Reginald, turning round, and after a hearty shake of hands, one took the other's arm, and on they strolled.

"Well, old fellow," said Fenham, "what brings you to Nice? I have just left a card for you at the Grande Bretagne. I saw your name an hour ago in the 'Liste des étrangers.' 'Captain and Mrs. Douglas and suite;' so you are married! What a mean thing never to have sent me any wedding cake, when you know my passion for it! Who is the lady to whom you have surrendered your liberty? I thought you looked thin and seedy, the natural consequences of matrimony!"

"You are wrong in your suspicions," said

Reginald ; " the Mrs. Douglas with me is my mother—the only Mrs. Douglas there ever will be for me ! "

The tone was such as caused Fenham to look more closely at his friend, and he saw that he was much altered ; the look of merry, careless, good nature was succeeded by a haggard, reckless expression. He took all this in at a glance ; but till Reginald should give him his confidence, he of course had too much tact to pretend to notice any change. So he laughed and said :

" Vowed to single blessedness ! Well, strange things come to pass in this world ! "

" Fenham," said Reginald, " I have been very ill—ill in mind and body ; such an illness as would frighten you even to think of. I have gone through more in the last few weeks than I thought a human being could suffer, and retain life and senses ! "

" Tell me all about it," said Fenham.

He saw with ready observation, that Reginald desired to make this confidence, therefore he asked for it.

"Not here," said Reginald, looking up and down the crowded streets. "Let us take a carriage, and during our drive, we can talk uninterruptedly."

So saying he hailed a "fiacre" which was passing. The driver naturally enquired in the not-easily-understood patois, spoken at Nice, where they wished to go.

"Dear me," said Fenham, "it is the most provoking thing that though I flatter myself that I am first-rate in French, it all goes out of my head the moment that I want to say something, where shall we go to?"

"My dear fellow," said Reginald, "I don't know a single place about here."

"Well, let us see, it doesn't matter. Coachy, allez à—let me see, I forget what the places are—ou vous pleasy."

This very distinct order was of course not understood by the driver, who sat grinning and gesticulating on his box.

“Good gracious!” said Fenham, “we shall never get away, from this place. For goodness sake, Douglas, say something or other. Look, there’s quite a crowd gathering round us. What’s the French for please? Oh, I have it—Coachy, ou vous, s’il vous plait—that’s where you please, or I’ll eat my hat!”

Still the driver hesitated, and at last begun a rapid list of the different lions in the neighbourhood.

“St. Andre, couvent du Cimiès—Villa Arson
—Vallon obscur—Villafranca!”

“Oh, for Heaven’s sake, stop! Villafranca
—Villafranca!” cried Fenham, and off they drove.

“How hot it makes one trying to talk this confounded French!” he continued. “Thank goodness, Douglas, you are come for I havn’t

a soul to speak English to. My uncle, Sir Walter Maitland, and my aunt won't speak a word of anything but French, neither will Violet, so I'm in a miserable state. By-the-bye, the Maitlands are at your hotel. Do you dine at the table d'hôte? Now I think of it," he continued, laughing, "it must have been you that sat next my cousin at dinner yesterday. She has been talking all this morning of the handsome bear that sat next her. I didn't know *you* under such a title."

"I suppose the individual who was so complimentary to me," said Reginald, rather vexed, "was a pert young lady that my mother has been raving of ever since."

"My cousin is anything but a pert young lady," said Fenham, warmly; "she is the sweetest, dearest little thing that ever breathed. Happy will be that man who wins such a flower as Violet, and wears her next his heart. I should be broken-hearted about her if she

wasn't my first cousin, and just the same to me as a sister."

"Well, I daresay she is all that you say; but for my part, my eyes have been so opened to the deception and the treachery of women, that, thank God, they can never be shut again!"

"Of course," said Fenham, "there are quantities of bad, heartless women in the world, but that ought only to make us appreciate the good ones the more."

"And where are you to find them?" said Reginald, bitterly.

"Wherever you look for them," said the other. "But tell me," he continued, "what is this miserable experience of yours that makes you so unjust to the whole sex?"

And then Reginald told him all; he did not hide any one fact from him. Fenham listened in silence, but when the whole sad tale was over, he said, "Douglas, thank God every day

of your life, that you have escaped the snares of that most atrocious woman!"

"Do you know her?" asked Reginald, for he had avoided her name.

"Not personally, thank God," replied Fennham, "I avoided that honour, and I warned that poor, unhappy cousin of mine against her; he was dear little Violet's only brother, and the best fellow living. He was being drawn into the vortex of her dangerous fascinations, when I left Calcutta. I spoke to him about her, and we almost quarrelled about her; he thought that she loved him, but it was only to get money and presents from the poor, dear boy. She tried hard to take me in too, but I abhor that style of woman—I avoided her in every possible way, but she had the assurance to make a bet with a friend of mine, that by a certain day she would persuade me to take her a drive in a very handsome open carriage which I had

just bought; and imagine the audacity of the woman writing me a note saying that I was so much like a dear friend of hers, named Fenham, such a handsome girl, that she felt sure that I must be her brother ; and she so much wished to hear of her, as she had a pocket handkerchief in her possession, left by Miss Fenham, and hoped that I would go and call on her, and take charge of this valuable article ; so I wrote a most polite note saying that her friend could not have been my sister, as she was very plain, therefore quite unlike me, and that she never possessed a handsome pocket handkerchief in her life ; but that even were it hers, that I would answer for her allowing Mrs. Churchill to keep it. You may fancy her rage, and as her bet had been made with a lady, she had to pay it !—that's one of the penalties of being a man, that women never pay their bets to you, and never give you change!"

By this time they had finished their drive, and so absorbed had Reginald been with the painful theme on which he had been speaking, that not one feature of the beautiful spot before him had he remarked. The lovely bay of Villafranca, with its surrounding beauties, were unnoticed, and when he returned to the hotel, he could not tell anything that he had seen. When they dismounted from their carriage, of course there was another scene over the payment. Fenham, whose grammar and pronunciation were equally vile, made himself so hot, and became so excited over the change, that he solemnly vowed to engage a courier to do all that for him. He was maddened with francs, sous, and centimes, and could not understand which was which. As soon as he became a little composed, he told Reginald how anxious he was to be introduced to his mother. "She must find it dull," he said, "being all alone."

"Alone!" cried Reginald — "I wish to Heaven that she was alone! Oh, my dear fellow, we made an awful mistake in bringing such a cousin with us!"

"Well, I'm partial to cousins," said Fenham, who put them all down in the same catalogue as his darling little Violet.

"Oh, my dear old boy, you are just the person I was praying might turn up here; you shall have this cousin with the greatest pleasure; let us sign the bargain at once," said Reginald.

"No, thank you," said the other, "I never buy a 'pig in a poke,' or take any other judgment than my own, as to my wife. Tell me about this fair creature—what is her name—her christian name I mean? the other is easily changed."

"Letitia," said his friend.

"I don't like it," said Fenham. "Letitia was the name of my first love, and she jilted me."

"Oh if that's all you dislike, there isn't the least fear of her jilting you—she'll stick to you like a leech—she'd give the world to be **Mrs. Anybody**," said Reginald.

"I couldn't do another Letitia, but I might recommend her to a friend. What is she like?" said Fenham.

"Well, upon my word, I can't tell you what she's like!" puzzled Reginald.

"Well, but what is her general effect, her general appearance? whom and what does she resemble?" questioned Fenham.

"Sand, brown sugar, and bran," said Reginald, solemnly. "Upon my life those are the only things in nature that I can compare her to!—a substratum of sand and brown sugar, and a top dressing of bran! She presents a monotony of appearance, such as one experiences in a large tract of sand, without even a hillock to break the waste."

"You don't mean to say that your unhappy

relative has no nose," said Fenham, in horror. "That ought to act as a hillock to the surrounding flat!"

"Oh, she has a nose, for now I remember that she is incessantly blowing it!" said Reginald. "If it were not for that circumstance, I should have almost fancied that she had none, but it's her mental, not her physical defects that make me dislike her—she's a sort of person who's always in the way, eternally before you wherever you go ; then she has such odious ways, she never shuts a door after her, and is everlastingly dropping either her scissors, thimble, or cotton reels ; and then she dives after these confounded things, and generally sweeps off in her crinoline, all the rest of her possessions, and even her work things seem to be part and parcel of herself. Most women's cottons and thimbles drop down, but hers always run all round the room, and generally go to earth under the fender,

or some inaccessible place, and then poker, tongs, and hearth-brush have to assist to dislodge them—thank goodness, cousins are not called on to do the polite—that's the only benefit I see that is to be derived from the connexion with her; but *you'll* have plenty of exercise and amusement in picking up all these little matters."

"Does she sing?" asked Fenham.

"Sing! yes; that she does—but it isn't pleasant, not an atom of soul or expression in it. I heard her once, and I never asked her again; but come to our room this evening and you shall judge for yourself."

As he spoke; they reached the door of the "Grande Bretagne," and Fenham followed Reginald upstairs to be introduced to Mrs. Douglas. It was a mutual pleasure; and each met the other as if they had been old friends.

"I should have known you anywhere, from seeing your picture," said Mrs. Douglas.

"Ditto, ditto, ditto," answered Fenham.

"Reginald has often shewn me your miniature; and he is so like you."

"Now, don't you be deceiving my mother by such flattery; and putting it into her head that she is like me," said Reginald.

There was a touch of his old playfulness of manner, and his mother's heart rejoiced to see it.

"Now," said he; "I must go, for my hair wants cutting awfully; so you and Fenham make yourselves agreeable to each other; I shall be back in half-an-hour," so saying, he left the room.

Mrs. Douglas and Fenham, looked at each other, and though we are told that there are no female Freemasons, I cannot help thinking that there must have been an

exception in her case; and that they “tipped” one another the signs; for no word was spoken; but each knew what was passing in the other’s mind, and Fenham, leaving his seat by the window—drew a chair close to Mrs. Douglas, and said in answer to the mysterious freemason communication,

“Yes; he has told me all; he must have suffered much, poor fellow—but it is passing away; what a blessed mistake that was of hers; the putting up those letters wrong; nothing but seeing that letter to her friend Mrs. Gore, would have opened his eyes.”

“Stop! Captain Fenhan,” said Mrs. Douglas. “I have never heard these facts from my son—possibly he might not wish me to know them?”

“On the contrary,” said Fenham. “I think he wished you to know one or two facts, which at the time he could not bring himself to tell you; and now, that the subject

is not discussed between you, he could not again allude to it; for the fact of his telling me all, proves that the wound is healing—not so tender to the touch as it was."

"God grant it!" said his mother fervently.

And then Fenham told several of the facts of the case that she was ignorant of.

"But what could have been her object?" said Mrs. Douglas.

"Her object was first of all probably—to gratify her love of admiration; to which there seems no bounds; and secondly, from what I know of her, I feel certain that she intended either to have entrapped your son into some gambling transactions; or to have borrowed large sums of money from him. You know that the unhappy boy, whose death she caused by her disgraceful conduct, was the only son of my uncle, Sir Walter Maitland; who with my aunt and cousin are in this hotel."

"Oh! that's the sweet girl who took my fancy so much at the table d'hôte," said Mrs. Douglas; "is she your cousin?"

"Yes," said Reginald; "and she is to be your daughter-in-law; so I am glad you like her."

"My daughter-in-law?" said Mrs. Douglas, opening her eyes, and beginning to fear that her visitor had suddenly been seized with incipient insanity.

"Yes," said Fenham quietly. "I have made arrangements in my own mind for Reginald to marry Violet. She is the sweetest little creature, and I have no doubt that he will soon find out her charms. I shall do my best, and you must assist me, of course without allowing the least idea of our plans to enter into the heads of our lovers."

"But how can I assist?" said Mrs. Douglas.

"Well, you must ask Violet very often to your room," said Fenham.

"But I don't know her yet," said Mrs. Douglas.

"All in good time," said Fenham, "let me see; can you not make out some relationship? all Scotch people are cousins; or can you make out some old youthful school friendship—do try and remember that you were at school, (no matter where or when) with a Miss Hay, don't you think there must have been a Miss Hay at your school?"

"I fear not," said Mrs. Douglas laughing; "for I never was at school."

"Oh, what an unfortunate circumstance! I was in hopes that you and my Aunt might have been at school together," said Fenham; "but it doesn't matter. I shall make my uncle and aunt call on you."

"I fear that poor Reginald is like the burnt child, who dreads the fire," said his mother ; "he seems to have a horror of a woman."

"Oh, that's a disease that all men have after their first love fit; but it soon goes away—there's nothing like Homœopathy for that,—*similia similibus curantur*—the only cure is to fall in love with somebody else, and that's sure to make you forget the first love," said Fenham, laughing.

"Oh," said Mrs. Douglas ; "if you had but seen how broken-hearted he was."

"Yes, of course," said Fenham ; "that's the necessary consequence—quite the correct thing ; but you know that a heart cannot be broken *twice*; if the fragments are carefully collected after the first fracture and put together again, it will be like a mended china plate, more difficult to break than before, and be warranted sound. Dear me !

in these days of railways, telegraphs, cork soles, and gutta percha boots, it would never do, if hearts were made of the same materials that they were composed of when there wasn't such a wear and tear of the system! Why we live ten times as fast as our grandfathers did; (bless the dear old gentlemen) and of course, there must be a difference in our moral and physical structure to suit the alterations of the times. People can't afford to break their hearts in the nineteenth century; it did very well for the dark ages; there was nothing else to do then; but I think it went out with the 'old style.' A heart has as many lives as a cat now; why, my dear Mrs. Douglas, if you only knew what *I* have gone through. I left off keeping account at number eighteen; but such a state was I reduced to, that I hadn't a coat or waistcoat that wouldn't have fitted me twice round; as for my boots,

I had to put on two pairs of slippers under them—my appetite was so reduced, that if you'll believe me, my scanty breakfast never consisted of above three cups of tea, two, eggs, and, perhaps, a little broiled ham, a few sardines, half-a-dozen muffins, and just a little salmon; or anything else not to hurt the mess-man's feelings by not eating. As for my sighs; the Colonel's nursery-maid used to put the baby's cradle outside the door, and my sighs were so deep-drawn and so strong, that they rocked the child to sleep; so now, my dear Mrs. Douglas, after all this you may expect to see your son recover even as *I* did.'

"I want you to look at those views of Nice," said Mrs. Douglas, when she had recovered the effects of Fenham's melancholy account of himself. He stepped out on to the balcony to look at them more clearly;

and after surveying them in silence for some time, was just returning to the room ; when a most extraordinary apparition met his gaze.

CHAPTER X.

MISS MOSTYN had passed a most delightful morning. She had tried on every bonnet at the principal milliner's *Magasin de modes*, and had bought two; having selected those most remarkable for their very *outré* style. The milliner had clasped her hands in ecstacy at their becomingness to her; and she was in the greatest delight at her appearance. Then, she had paid mints of money for a new "crinoline;" it was a "skeleton," and the very last "*nouveauté*" from Paris. It had been sold (so said the milliner) to some
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“very grand English *miladi*;” but she would allow Madlle. to have it, as with such a bonnet—she must have a perfect crinoline. So Letitia was flattered into buying this exquisite “skeleton;” which the milliner told her, would give her a grace and a *tournure*, which no one else in Nice would possess. She hurried home, and proceeded to try on all her finery—informing her maid, that when this was over, she would have her hair brushed. Now this process of hair brushing was one of the great affairs of Miss Mostyn’s life. She had a great quantity of dry looking hair, which resembled badly saved hay; but of which she was extremely proud. Vast attention was bestowed on this possession, it was brushed for half-an-hour (by the watch) every morning, and for the same time every night; twice a week was it washed, when there was such a calling out for eggs, lemon juice, and hot water—once a fortnight was it

ended ; and at any odd times when Letitia had nothing to do, or had some interesting book, the subdued looking Abigail was summoned to this eternal brushing. On this particular day, the young person in question had promised to herself the pleasure of joining a large party of the "high life below stairs ;" who were going on donkeys, (according to the custom and example of their masters and mistresses at Nice) to see some of the "lions" of the environs, and great was her annoyance to receive her "standing orders for the day" from her mistress. However, there was no appeal, so she prepared to assist her mistress to put on the "skeleton." Great was Miss Mostyn's distress to find that the "perfect crinoline" was rather short. She was much annoyed, and snubbed the maid, who did not think it too short.

" You know nothing about it," said she tartly, " do you think that I should trust to

your opinion on such an important matter?
Where is my aunt's maid?"

"Gone out with a large party on donkeys,"
sighed the poor Abigail.

"Well, if this petticoat is too short, it
must go back this evening, for if I keep
it till to-morrow, perhaps they won't
change it; is there any other lady's maid
in the hotel that knows how a crinoline
should set?"

"There isn't any maid in the hotel at home
except myself," answered the maid.

"Well then, I must just go and ask my
aunt," said Letitia (Mrs Douglas was her
cousin, but Letitia thought it made her
appear more juvenile to call her aunt),
"where is Captain Douglas?"

"I met him on the stairs with his hat on,
going out, and as he came out of Mrs.
Douglas's room, he said that he should not
be back for half an hour."

"Very well then," said Miss Mostyn, "my aunt must be alone, so I will ask her to look at this petticoat, and see if it is too short, and at the same time I will ask her if she thinks that the shades of my bonnet and my parasol match; if not, they must be sent back to be changed this evening."

So saying, Letitia, who was parading about in her room in her crinoline with no petticoat over it, put on her new bonnet, put up her new parasol, and opening her room-door, which joined Mrs. Douglas', passed on through it, and opening the door which led into the drawing-room, presented herself in this very unusual costume. Fenham was looking at the views of Nice; all was silent; therefore, after listening for a moment, to make sure that Reginald was not there, she walked in, and turning her back to Mrs. Douglas, she said—

"Dear Aunt, will you please tell me if you

think this ‘skeleton’ too short, and if the shades of my bonnet and parasol match?”

All this was uttered in the same tone, and Letitia receiving no answer, turned round, and to her horror, saw a tall military looking man standing by the window, surveying her with the most perplexed expression. Any one who has ever been privileged to look behind the scenes of a lady’s toilette, and to be admitted to its sacred mysteries, will acknowledge that a woman, attired in a skeleton petticoat, with no friendly over-skirt to cast a veil over its ribs and bones, presents a most extraordinary appearance. Add to this, a very dressy and *outré* bonnet (an ultra spoon) with pyramids of feathers, and on one side a humming-bird; over which hold a fancy parasol, and then imagine the object which appeared to have dropped from the clouds. It was useless for either Mrs. Douglas or

Fenham to try and prevent themselves giving way to immoderate fits of laughter. They both were in great danger of choking. Fenham could not find his handkerchief to stuff into his mouth, so he seized a knitted antimacassar off the back of an arm-chair, and forced it half way down his throat. Poor Miss Mostyn turned and fled ; but, alas ! for the attractive powers of a "skeleton," she caught on a piece of carved wood projecting from the end of the sofa, and after dragging the piece of furniture some way with her, she was obliged to stop to disentangle herself from it. Of course, Fenham (the knitted antimacassar still hanging from his mouth), flew to the rescue, and at this moment Reginald, who had heard the laughing as he came up stairs, and fancied his mother in hysterics, rushed into the room, and arrived in time to see poor Letitia half distracted,

making her exit through the door, one of her steels twirling after her like some snake, her bonnet (which had received a violent concussion from running against Fenham in her agitation, and a compound fracture against the door), on the back of her head, while the poor humming-bird had fallen from his station, and was lying on the floor, minus one shiny eye, and half his tail, both of which had fallen victims to the violent agitation under which the unfortunate owner of the bonnet had been suffering ! Poor Miss Mostyn's ears were greeted with the echoes of the peals of laughter long after she had reached the haven of her own apartment ; and terrible was her annoyance to think of the ridiculous first appearance which she had presented to the man who might possibly be destined to be the husband, whose advent she had been so long expecting ! But, after a while, she con-

soled herself by saying, "After all, there's no indelicacy in a *crinoline!* men must know that women wear them, and I see nothing to be ashamed of in it." So she had her hair done up in double quick time, put on another crinoline, and her best silk dress, and holding in her hand an elaborately embroidered, and highly-perfumed handkerchief, she entered the *salon* in her most imposing manner, having said 'plum,' just as she opened the door, to bring her lips in the most becoming form. I mentioned that she had been most carefully educated, and the lady who had "taught her young ideas how to shoot," had been most particular in this point, with her pupils. Those, whose style of beauty would be increased by a "pout," were instructed to say "prune," when they wished to get their lips "in position;" those, on the contrary, whom Nature had bestowed too fully-

developed a “pout,” were ordered to say “plum.” Miss Mostyn came under this latter denomination, so *her* life was passed in a series of plums!

But, alas! all this elaborate “get up” was lost, for Reginald and Fenham left the room a few minutes before she entered it. So she returned to her own apartment; and having rescinded the permission for her maid to take a walk, she took her book, and was *brushed* for an hour and twenty minutes, at the expiration of which time, the maid falling half-asleep, hit her a violent blow on the nose, by letting the brush fall, when she was in a state of *quasi-somnolency*; and the aforesaid nose was then fomented, to avert swelling, for another hour, after which period it was necessary that she should dress for dinner, when she appeared in a most elegant *demi-toilette*, to strike the first blow at Fenham’s heart;

but alas, alas ! he had gone to dine with a friend ; so, for a second time, all her trouble had been lost !

CHAPTER XI.

THE next day, Sir Walter, Lady, and Miss Maitland paid a visit of state to Captain and Mrs. Douglas, and Miss Mostyn. Violet wished to know whether she and her mother were to pay their visit with, or without bonnets.

“It will be so droll, Harry,” she said to her cousin, “for us to dress up in bonnets and cloaks to call on people on the next *étage*! Am I to put on strong boots or goloshes? and is papa to put on his hat?”

Lady Maitland was one of those nervous,

invalidish persons, who are always suffering from nerves, and are tiresome both to themselves, and other people. She was a kind, but very exigeante mother, and poor Violet's temper must have been angelic, to bear so sweetly with her. She never would give a decided answer about anything. If Violet wished to walk, her mother would almost decide on driving; then, at the last minute, when dressed for her drive, would suddenly discover that her nerves required being soothed by her daughter's reading aloud to her. Harry Fenham often wished his aunt's nerves in another hemisphere, when he saw how disappointed poor Violet looked at being so often prevented joining parties either to ride, walk, or drive; but she herself never complained, though of course she could not help seeing that her mother could often have spared her.

The intimacy between the two families

increased. Mrs. Douglas was charmed with Violet, and she often came to her room. Reginald, true as yet to his resolutions, avoided her as much as common politeness would permit. He and Fenham were constantly together, and the tactics of the latter were most wonderfully politic. He pretended to imagine that Reginald never could love again.

"No! my dear fellow," he used to say, "a blow such as you have sustained will be a life-long affair!"

"But other men have loved and forgotten," Reginald would reply, rather annoyed at Fenham's pertinacity; though had his friend suggested such a possibility, he would have been equally annoyed; and Fenham laughed in his sleeve at the success of his undertaking. Sometimes Violet and Miss Mostyn joined them, when Fenham always said privately to him, "I know, of course, how you hate

women, so I will not let my little cousin bore you."

Once or twice Reginald said to himself, "He might have allowed me some choice in the matter, instead of taking it for granted that I never mean to speak to a woman again, though I can never love again! He's the best old fellow in the world—but people may carry their kindness too far."

But, however Fenham appropriated his cousin at the beginning of the walk or drive, he always contrived to allow Reginald the benefit of her society before very long, and appeared to devote himself to Miss Mostyn, though her extreme want of imagination and sentiment were very disagreeable to him. He was extremely fond of poetry, and possessed a wonderful memory, and delighted in repeating or quoting any favourite author or poet, and Letitia's utter inability to enter

into his own romantic spirit often, provoked him excessively.

One day when they were all on the beach watching the never-ceasing waves beat and break at their feet, Fenham decoyed Miss Mostyn a little away from Reginald, who was listening with evident admiration to Violet, as she recited, in a sweet, animated voice, Byron's beautiful lines—

“Roll on, thou deep and dark blue ocean, roll,” &c.

“What a pity it is,” he said, “that there is no ebb and flow in this lovely sea to bring up the sea-weed, by which one loses that delicious smell of the sea which one has at most sea-side places! here one cannot have the associations of ‘the odour of brine from the ocean.’”

“Dear me,” said Letitia, “I never had any associations of the odour of brine, except how

I used to have it at school for my chilblains, and the smell was horrid, and it was so sticky, and used to smart so."

Now do you think that any jury would have been found to punish Fenham if he had pitched Miss Mostyn, chilblains and all, into the briny ocean, and left her there?

He very nearly did so, but he thought better of it, and merely refrained from any further quotations or poetry. He was beginning to get rather alarmed that she fancied that he was making love to her, and was very careful in avoiding anything that might be construed into doing the lover.

CHAPTER XII.

THE mornings were so lovely, and everything looked so beautiful, that Reginald often went out before breakfast to enjoy the first fresh breath of day. He had often seen Violet out too, but had never joined her. He remarked how often she took the same walk, not by the sea, but along the "Rue de la Croix de Marbre." Several times he had seen her turn up the narrow "Rue du Temple." There was a time when he had no suspicions of any woman, that happy confidence in the sex had passed away, and a suspicion darted through

his mind ; what could a young girl go so often alone to the same place for ? could she have some clandestine love affair. Well, what if she had, that was no business of his ; but somehow the idea was not a pleasant one. She was nothing to him ; no woman ever could be again. *That* was a comfort—but for his friend Fenham's sake he would watch her. She was his cousin, dear to him as a sister ; so he would not allow her to elope some fine morning, if he could help it, with some rascally, garlic-eating foreigner—no ! he would save her ; so the following morning he followed her. She held in her hand a small basket. Good gracious ! was she actually taking food to this vile lover ? or had she been ordered by him to take the silver spoons from the hotel—perhaps the teapot !

On she went, and Reginald following, keeping out of sight. At last she passed through the little door into the English ce-

metary, and he lost sight of her. However, his curiosity was too much aroused to leave her without learning what secret brought her there. At last he saw her at the further corner of the cemetery. She was kneeling by a grave, over which she strewed the contents of her basket—the loveliest flowers. There were violets, orange-blossoms, camellias, and lovely double-peach blossoms. She pressed her lips to the marble slab, and rising up, left the burial ground, and he could see that there were tears on her cheeks. He felt ashamed of his suspicions, but now another idea entered into his fertile brain. She, too, had loved—the hand of death had torn from her some adored one, and thus she mourned over his grave.

A strange feeling came over him, and at that moment he felt that his first love was dead, and that another scarce defined, scarce acknowledged affection, was slowly growing

up within him. Not till the idea came upon him that Violet Maitland loved another, or had loved another, did the idea enter into his heart, that already, without his suspecting it, she had made a considerable way in his affections. The existence of jealousy in the heart is oft-times the first indication that love is there ; without the latter feeling, the former cannot exist. Well, he determined to see who was this dead rival to whom she had come to make an offering. He crossed to the spot where Violet had stood, and on a slab of pure white marble he read the following words—

FLORENCE MAITLAND,
AGED 18 :
ELDEST DAUGHTER OF
SIR WALTER AND LADY MAITLAND,
(OF CROOME,)
APRIL 15TH, 1859.

" Sorrow not as those without hope."

" God forgive me ! " said Reginald, as he read the lines, " for suspecting that pure, sweet

child. Oh, of all the wrongs that Inez Churchill did me, there was none so bitter as teaching me distrust. *She* first made me doubt a woman's innocence and purity. Oh, Violet, sweet as the flower that bears your lovely name ; how could I suspect you ? ”

With what altered feelings did he leave the spot where she whom he had so misjudged, had come to mourn over a sister's early death ! He felt rather ashamed when he next met her, but that evening, when they were walking with the rest cf the party, his suspicions once more took a tangible form, and proved to him how hard it was to unlearn Mrs. Churchill's bitter lesson.

A closely-written paper fell from Violet's pocket, and when a few seconds afterwards, he handed it to her, she blushed painfully, and said “ Oh, Captain Douglas, you did not read it ! ”

Reginald crimsoned with vexation, and in

his stiffest, haughtiest tones he replied, "Does Miss Maitland consider me capable of reading her letters?"

There was a long silence. A jealous demon at Reginald's heart suggested a love letter; the morning's experience had been lost upon him. Violet was grieved, and though no suspicion of his real thoughts entered into her mind, she saw plainly enough that Reginald was hurt and angry, so she looked up in his face and said, "shall we go back and look for it?"

"Look for what?" said he rather crossly.

"Oh," said Violet, smiling, "you have found it—I thought you had lost your voice!" But he would not acknowledge the olive branch thus offered. "I see what she wants; she is afraid that I shall tell her father, or mother, or Fenham, that she is carrying on some clandestine correspondence," said Reginald to

himself; "but I have nothing to do with her affairs." So he remained silent. At last, Violet stopped, and turning towards him with a dignity surprising in one so childish said, "Captain Douglas, I know of no right that you, or any other man, has to call me to account, even in your own mind for my conduct; but at the same time I do not choose to lie under a suspicion, even in the ideas of an indifferent person. You evidently imagine that the paper which you picked up just now, is something of which I am ashamed. I am a young girl, and know little of the world, therefore cannot tell to what your suspicions may amount; but you are a friend of my dear cousin Harry Fenham, and for *his* sake, as well as for mine, I now desire you to peruse this paper." So saying she gave it into his hand.

Very much ashamed of himself, he took it, and read the following poem entitled:

"HOPE VERSUS MEMORY."

"Hope is the ray, whose beacon bright
 Alone can guide with cheering light,
 The weary wanderer thro' the night
 Of sorrow's gloom.
 For it can point with steady ray,
 Where shines a bright eternal day
 Beyond the tomb !

But Memory's power oft brings again
 Across the soul a saddened strain—
 Which thrills with keenest throb of pain
 Upon the heart.
 While Hope a distant future gladdens,
 Memory's dark retrospect oft saddens
 The tears which start !

For who, that in this vale of tears,
 Hath wander'd but a few short years,
 And found not griefs, and pains, and fears,
 Man's portion here below ?
 The mortal o'er whose weary soul
 The passing years that onward roll,
 Bring not their weight of woe ?

Beats there one heart, o'er which the knell
 Of buried hopes, like funeral bell,
 Hath never struck, no sad farewell—
 Hath caused to weep ?
 By adverse winds his bark ne'er tost,
 Or freighted with all life's treasure lost,
 On the rough deep ?

One human eye which hath not shed,
 Its tear of sorrow o'er the dead,
 Or wept for scenes of gladness fled
 Ne'er to return—
 One soul, where sorrow's chilling breath,
 Hath never pass'd, nor hand of death
 Hath bid to mourn ?

No pang so keen, no aching smart,
Of all that rend the human heart,
As felt, when Hope's last rays depart,
 And take their flight.
When dies the last, faint, glimmering spark,
And in the lone and cheerless dark,
 It sinks in night.

Memory recalls a painful past,
But Hope will cheer us to the last,
And o'er the darkest sky will cast,
 Her rainbow bright.
Where memory's blackest cloud had been,
Hope's "Silver lining" shall be seen,
 And all be light.

Then give me Hope, *my* path to cheer,
Her gentle hand shall dry each tear,
Her light, my struggling bark shall steer
 To Heaven's blest shore.
When memory, and the past, enshrin'd
In darkness, must be left behind,
Then brightest Hope's glad rays I find,
 And never lose them more.

Reginald felt utterly ashamed of himself, and in the humblest manner begged for forgiveness, which was granted on his promising never to offend again.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHEN Reginald found himself alone in his room that night—he subjected himself to a severe examination. He used the “stethesope” and sounded his heart;—it was undoubtedly, to use an Irish medical term, “engaged.” He felt much ashamed to consider how much mistaken he had been in imagining that he never could recover his first disappointment. It was humiliating to think how little he had known of his heart. What would his mother say? What would Fenham think? he who had so often impressed on his mind the im-

possibility of his forgetting Mrs. Churchill ? Finally what would Mrs. Churchill herself say ? He felt that Violet was the very antipodes of his first love. How ashamed he felt of having suspected *her*? Her poem seemed to him to embody the two great affections of his life ; one was a dark and bitter memory, the other a bright and glowing hope ; one was the “dark cloud ;” the other the “silver lining.” How utterly different were the two women in every respect ! One gifted with extreme fascination, and knowing every turn in the heart of man ; and how to work upon it for her own ends ; the other simple—utterly ignorant of the ways of the world, sweet, natural, pure, and high-minded, incapable of deception, and full of the highest sentiments of honour.

Violet was a perfect child of nature. Mrs. Churchill a perfect woman of the world. Violet, nature itself, Mrs. Churchill art so

skilfully got up that it was almost nature; one was the true, pure metal, the other a perfect imitation, whose falsehood could only be known when put to the test. Which of these two would a man prefer to be the guardian of his happiness and honour? Reginald felt that if he could but win and wear this sweet flower, he need not fear for either. He decided on losing no time in hearing from her own lips, whether she would allow herself to be transplanted into another soil. He felt sure of his friend Fenham's assistance to carry out his plans, and next morning after breakfast, he followed him to his room, and though very much afraid of the unmerciful quizzing—which he knew—was in store for him, he said “My dear fellow—I want your assistance.” There was something so guilty in his voice and manner, that Fenham looked at him, and burst into violent fits of laughter. Reginald was highly

offended, and rose to leave the room, saying, “I came here to consult you on an important matter, not to be ridiculed.”

“My dear old fellow,” said Fenham, “Don’t be so confoundedly touchy; I know as well as if you had told me, what you want to tell me, and I can’t help laughing to think how all my prognostications have come true.”

“What prognostications?” said Reginald.

“Why what you are come to tell me, that after all your vows of undying hatred to women, and your declarations against marrying, you are over head and ears in love with my dear little Violet, and want me to say a good word for you with the old birds; oh, you shocking humbug, don’t you think that I have seen this change in your politics all the time?”

“Fenham,” said Reginald, “You knew me better than I knew myself.”

"Of course I did," said Fenham, "no man ever knows himself; but what part am I to act for you?"

"Well, first of all, do you think she'll have me, if I ask her; do you think she loves, I mean, cares for me?" said Reginald.

"Ah, I cannot tell a lady's secret, but this I knew, that as much as a young girl can feel for a man, who has never told her his love, I am certain she has for you, and you must find out for yourself the rest; all that I can say is—you are a lucky fellow if you win that sweet child's pure, first affections, she's 'true blue,' the pure gold, the right thing, and no mistake," said Fenham, waxing eloquent in his cousin's praises.

"That she is," said Reginald.

So they arranged that Fenham was to persuade Lady Maitland to allow Violet to join a riding party, consisting of himself, Reginald, and Miss Mostyn; this latter, they could not

leave out; so Fenham promised to monopolise her completely, so that Reginald should have Violet all to himself.

"I hope to goodness, that this isn't one of my Aunt's 'nerve' days; let me see, Tuesday, no, she's got the *Times* to-day; Wednesday is an awful day, I know, but I don't think this is one of her hysterical days. I hope, my dear fellow, that nerves skip a generation like gout, or you'll be worried to death with Violet; better think the matter over before you take the final leap. I know a fellow who vows that he'll never marry till they can make women without either backs or nerves, for he says that wherever he goes, he finds either of these misfortunes; so he wants a wife made to order." So Fenham rattled on, and was induced to go and present his request. Lady Maitland had just got a very interesting novel from the library, it was a very soothing sleepy book, with nothing to excite her

nerves. She had a new cap on too, which Fenham pronounced the most becoming head-dress he had ever seen, and insisted on her giving him a solemn promise that she would allow him to accompany her next day to be photographed in it.

“Don’t you think to-day would be better, if you insist upon my going?” sighed Lady Maitland. “I am such a poor creature that I never know what may occur on the morrow.”

“Oh dear!” said Fenham, “I wouldn’t have a cat photographed to-day, most unbecoming sort of weather.”

“Oh, then; I won’t be done till the weather changes!”

So she gave her consent for Violet to join the party. Fenham rushed off to order the horses, and after a very long wait for Miss Mostyn, who was obliged to be stuffed into her habit by both her own maid and Mrs.

Douglas's, so stout had she grown since she last wore it, the whole party set off, and took the road which leads to Villafranca and passing that curious village, mounted the narrow path overhanging the sea. There was a steep rocky precipitous bank beneath them, which rose up from the water's edge, which lay blue and lovely far below them. It was a dangerous spot, for except a few bushes, there was nothing to prevent a fall, and as they rode higher and higher, Reginald said—

“I think this is a most dangerous place for anything but a quiet donkey ; if one of the horses should shy or back, he must go over the bank, and be smashed to pieces ; what do you say to going back ?”

“Oh, no ! ” said Violet, “the road will widen just after we pass that clump of trees.”

“Possibly,” answered Reginald, “but we must still have to return by this path, and

look what an awful steep place there is where it begins to widen, and nothing to prevent one's going over?"

"If you are afraid you had better go back," said Miss Mostyn, who had not recovered being told by both the maids that her waist must have increased at least two inches since she last wore her habit. She was miserably uncomfortable, and so tightly laced that she could scarcely breath. Tight lacing is always wretched, but on horse-back is a perfect martyrdom.

On they rode, but Miss Mostyn true to her habit of always dropping things at the most inconvenient times, which was one of her idiosyncracies, discovered that her handkerchief was missing, and on looking back, there it was an immense way behind, on a lower path round which they had wound. Of course, Fenham could do no less than offer to go and fetch it, and wishing that the lady

herself could be as easily dropped as her handkerchief, he jumped off his horse thinking it easier to scramble down the bank than ride all the way round. It was a good long scramble, and he wished her anywhere a thousand miles off, for it was a very hot day; and he was thinking how he should climb up again, when piercing shrieks, and a tremendous struggle caught his ears ; stones and earth came rolling down from above, and Reginald's voice in agonised tones implored him to come to the rescue. The bank was very steep, and the slight branches snapped as he seized hold of them, but he sped on, his hands torn and bleeding from the sharp pieces of rock. The struggle grew fiercer and fiercer above his head, and above all he heard Miss Mostyn's shrill screams.

Just after he had left the party, they had reached a spot, where there were thick clumps of trees on either sides of the path, only a few

feet from the road, where the rock went straight down an enormous depth to the sea, without anything to protect the passers-by. Violet rode first, and at this critical point a half crazy woman, dressed in a bright scarlet cloak, and waving a long stick with a red flag at the end of it, stepped out from the wood. Violet's horse backed with a violent effort almost over the cliff. In an instant Reginald had dismounted, and seized the bridle; but the mad woman, utterly unconscious of the awful danger in which her pranks placed the rider of the horse, continued to wave her flag before it, and to make the most discordant music. The horse, an Arab, and but little used, was terrified to madness; it plunged, reared, and snorted, and each moment backed nearer to the awful brink of the precipice, from which Reginald had succeeded in dragging it. He tried in vain to disengage Violet from the saddle, her foot had got so firmly wedged in the stirrup, that she could

not pull it out, and he dared not let go his grasp of life and death on the horse's head, so could not assist her. Each moment the frightened animal drew nearer, drawing Reginald after him, to the brink of the precipice.

"Throw your arms round me, Violet," he said, as he threw one arm round her waist.

"No," said Violet, "I shall but drag you with me," and she tried to free herself from his clasp.

"We shall perish together then," said Reginald, in a hoarse voice.

His strength was fast sinking, a thousand bells seemed to ring in his ears; brilliant colours danced before his eyes; he felt a cold chill creeping round his heart; he could not hold the horse another moment; his hands seemed powerless; he lifted his eyes to take one last look of the sky—the world he was leaving; one last glance at those sweet eyes which starting, with terror, gleamed from her

face, which was pale as death, and then resigned himself to the horrible death which he was powerless to avert for another moment. But just as the horse's hind hoofs were over the cliff, the mad woman rushed forward, and gave a wild, unearthly yell ; one terrific bound he gave, and the exertion broke the girths, strained to the utmost by his violent efforts. The saddle fell violently to the ground, and Violet and Reginald were thrown, still clinging to each other, to the earth.

The horse, freed from the power that had kept it back, fell crashing through the under-wood, and rolling over and over, bounded from one mass of sharp rock to another, and fell with a dull, heavy sound on the pebbly beach far below, and was dashed to pieces. Fenham heard the fall of the horse as he rolled down, and a loud shout of joy and triumph at the escape of the others rose from his lips. He soon reached the top of the bank,

where the awful and deadly conflict had been going on. Reginald, in the violent fall which the sudden breaking of the girths had given him, had struck his head against the bough of a tree, and was lying stunned and motionless, while Violet, who had fainted, was also insensible. Reginald's arms were clasped with the energy of a dying grasp round her, and in that last moment hers were thrown round his neck. Something in that last look which he had fixed on her, just as both thought they were parting for ever on earth, had swept down the barriers, which a yet unspoken love had raised between them. She saw it all; the love which she was winning and losing at the same awful moment, but she felt that they were at least to die together, and threw her arms round him in answer to that one last look, in a first and last embrace.

"This will bring matters to a crisis," said Fenham to himself. "It's almost a pity to

rouse them ; not a drop of water is there, nor a drop of wine. I'll never stir out without my flask of brandy again ; one ought to be prepared for all emergencies. I wonder if smoking a cigar under Violet's nose would rouse her. I've heard of burnt feathers. Why couldn't they have put off all this till they got back to the hotel ; people are very inconsiderate!"

" Major Fenham," said Miss Mostyn, " I am going to faint!"

" Well, let me know when you are right off," said Fenham, " and I'll attend to you ; but at present my attention is taken up with those who are fainting really, not those who are only thinking of it."

At this moment Reginald sat up, and passing his hand across his forehead, said in an unsteady voice :

" What's the matter ?"

" Well, I want you to tell me," said Fen-

ham. "I came up this confounded cliff—just look at my hands—and I find you and Violet apparently acting the 'babes in the wood;' and Miss Mostyn wouldn't help me to cover you with leaves—wouldn't be a robin!"

"Oh, Major Fenham," sobbed Letitia, "I'm sure I never heard you ask me to get you any leaves; I would have helped you to do anything for poor, dear Miss Maitland. Do you think she's quite dead?"

"Do you think that I should be standing here so unconcerned about it, even if she were half dead?" said Fenham, and very soon Violet gave signs of life, and declared herself not a bit hurt, only shaken.

The side-saddle was put on Fenham's horse and he walked, while Reginald, as the invalid, mounted his own, and put Fenham's saddle before him, and the party returned to Nice; silent except Miss Mostyn, who never ceased talking and asking questions which nobody

answered, as to how it took place, which she, as the only spectator, ought to have been more fully aware of, than any of the rest of the party.

Reginald was too much still under the influence of the awful scene, through which he had so lately passed, to enter into conversation. The agony of that moment was still haunting him. He had been, as it were, brought into the actual presence of death, and never till then, had he felt how sweet life is to the human soul. He felt awe-struck, and yet in that memory, there was one sweet, bright spot; he recalled Violet's look at that awful moment, he felt the clasp of her arms, and he saw the first-last look of love that beamed from her sweet eyes. She rode silently by his side, and now that the danger was over, she seemed cold and distant. Had she regretted that impulse? Lovers are proverbially fond of self-martyrdom, so he worried himself all the way home about it.

"I am thinking, Violet," said Fenham with a groan, "what a terrible attack of nerves your poor mother will have to-night, when she hears all this. The attack is not due till to-morrow, but I am awfully afraid it will come on too soon."

"I must tell her," said Violet half smiling ; "I never could hide either good or bad tidings from those I love."

"Well, this is a mixture of both bad and good. I hope there may be no permanent bad results to either party," said Fenham looking mischievously at Violet, who blushed as if she had been a rose instead of a Violet. The tints were reflected on Reginald's cheeks too.

Lady Maitland had three separate and distinct attacks of hysterics that night, between 8 p.m., and 11 p.m., when thanks to an unusually strong dose of brandy and water, administered by Fenham's private orders

to the maid, she became oblivious and did not regain consciousness till 9 a.m. next day, when she had a very good breakfast, and before she had time to make arrangements for any further attacks, Fenham sent up a message to remind her of her promise to accompany him to be photographed.

CHAPTER XIV.

REGINALD's first thought when he awoke next morning was, that after the preceding day's event, he must at once seek a final interview with Violet. The tale was half told, the old—old story.

"Old as eternity, but not outworn,"

and he must finish that half told tale, speak with his lips what he had as yet only told with his eyes, but the language of the eyes is as intelligible to the heart, as that of the lips is to the ear ; but he must tell her all his

first—sad—bitter experience of the pains and penalties of love. *Then* would he ask her to change the dark cloud of memory for the golden tints of Hope.

He went to Lady Maitland's *salon*, and after the most anxious enquiries after her health, he said, "Will you trust your daughter to me for a couple of hours?"

"Oh pray do, my dear Aunt," said Fenham, "Violet will fidget us to death at the photographic studio, and you know how anxious I am that you should be done well, and do full justice to that most becoming cap."

So the bell was rung, and orders were sent to Miss Maitland to dress for a walk. She soon appeared looking lovely, in a dress of pale, cool-looking, grey merino, with a long bournous of the same colour and material; and a little straw hat with a blue feather. Her dress was festooned up over a petticoat of buff pique, embroidered in black, and showed

her pretty little feet and ankles to great advantage. Both the young men gazed at her with admiration.

Reginald's was un-spoken, but Fenham said, "Upon my word, Violet, I have seen plainer and more ordinary looking young ladies than *you*, during the six and thirty years that I have walked this weary vale of tears; ah, I love to make you blush, you little conscious thing, I shall never forgive the fate that made me your first cousin, for if we had been a step further in relationship, I should certainly have made you Mrs. Harry Wentworth Fenham."

"I think you might say that you would have *asked* me to be Mrs. Harry," said Violet laughing.

"Oh, you'd only be too glad of such a piece of luck as to be my wife," said Fenham, "but come along for our walk."

He was considerate enough to accompany

them part of the way, for he rightly thought that Violet would feel awkward at being sent out alone with Reginald, it looked so very like being sent on purpose to be proposed to! But before they had gone very far, he suddenly recollected some very important article that he had forgotten, saying,

“If I don’t overtake you in ten minutes, don’t lose your walk for me.”

And with a meaning look at Reginald, and a sly glance at Violet, which sent the crimson blood into her cheeks, he rushed off, and it is perhaps needless to remark, did *not* overtake them in ten minutes.

“Where shall we go to?” asked Reginald, as if he cared one straw where he went, if Violet was only with him.

“I will take you to such a lovely place, where my sister Florence used to love to go. It is four years since she died, and we have been here every year since; and I always go to the last

spot where she went. It was her last drive—only three days before her death."

So she took him to that lovely spot, known to the visitors of Nice as the "Vallon des fleurs," where the whole ground is covered with an exquisite carpet of blue hepaticas, whose colour rivals the azure of the cloudless sky, or the intense blue of the sea.

"Sit down here, Violet," said Reginald. "I have a tale to tell you; it is the story of my life; there are two volumes to the book. Listen while I read you the first, sad—wretched volume."

So he told her his history, and also told her that the woman who had slain his happiness, was the same who had been virtually the murderer of her only and beloved brother. He hid no one feeling of his heart from her; dwelt on her beauty, her fascination, on his love for her, and finally revealed all her perfidy; but it was all told in a calm, unagitated tone,

that shewed how completely it was a thing of the past: how past all resurrection, was that love once so intense, so overwhelming.

“ Now,” said he, “ you have heard the first volume; the second is an allegory.

“ There was a man, heart-broken, embittered, suffering in mind and body; he had been taught, by that most powerful teacher, Experience, to doubt all faith, purity, and honour in woman. He had been injured in his best and holiest affections ; he had nourished a viper in his bosom, and it had stung him, and the sting rankled and festered, and seemed beyond all healing. There was but *one* remedy, and that was forgetfulness, but where and how was he to find that boon ? He had heard of the fabled streams of Lethe, one draught of which, should bring healing and peace to his troubled soul. He should drink of it, and lose the bitter pangs that ever rent his heart,

and were never absent from him. He was told that

“To conquer love, one needs but will to conquer.”

but he had not the power to control his will. He sought a foreign shore, perchance there he might find the fabled streams for which he thirsted.

“Time wore on. There was a lovely flower which bloomed and flourished near him, but he was insensible to its beauty, and he heeded not its perfume. It did not flaunt gaily among the other flowers, but only blessed with its fragrance the home where it grew in modest virtue. All other eyes admired this lovely flower ; *his* alone looked with indifference and suspicion on it. True, it was fair to look upon, but in its heart’s core, no doubt there was the poison, the plague-spot which had once before infected his being. But while he

knew it not, and fancied that another memory haunted his soul with its black cloud, behold ! this sweet flower had taken root, and had grown up within his heart, and was filling his soul with its fragrance. He had sought for the fabled waters of forgetfulness, and lo ! an unseen hand, had held the draught to his lips, and he drank of the cup, and the waves washed over his heart ; and as the sea obliterates the footprints from the sand with its returning tide, so had the traces and memories of his past miseries been blotted out. But the tide which had flowed over the past traces, now left, as it ebbed, other foot-prints on the tablets of his heart. The waves had washed away for ever the memory of a cruel, deceitful, heartless, unworthy woman, but in her stead was now enshrined in his heart, a pure, sweet, high-minded being, lovely, and modest as the flower whose name she bore—the type of retiring innocence and virtue. He

longed to plant this sweet flower in his heart, that it might blossom for him alone; that its beauty and fragrance might be all his own.

"Do you think, Violet," he said, looking down at her, and taking her hand in his, "do you think that the flower would give herself to the heart who loved her?"

There was no answer, and he bent down and looked in her face.

"One look, Violet, will tell me all I wish to know," he said. "If you love me, raise those sweet eyes."

Is it necessary to say that she did raise them? or to mention what was the result of her raising them? How he caught her to his heart, and held her there in a long, fervent embrace; and the kisses that he printed on her lips were the first that had ever been pressed there.

CHAPTER XV.

"AND now, my darling," said Reginald, "I have told you *my* secret; have you anything to 'fess,' like Topsy? Have you ever cared for any one as you want to persuade me you care for me?"

He spoke gaily, for he had not much fear of her answer; but Violet, who was a true woman, therefore full of mischief, and with a thorough appreciation of the delights of teasing, thought that she would enjoy this deli-

cious pastime just for a wee bit; so when he passed his arm round her waist, and drew her to him with the question, "has my little Violet ever loved any one before?" she gave an immense sigh, and answered—

"Only once!" What a change passed over her lover's face.

"Good gracious," he mentally ejaculated, "What a pace the rising generation live at; here's a woman who was only eighteen a week ago, and she tells me that she has only loved once!"

There was a pause, and Reginald felt very much injured, that Violet, as well as himself, should have presumed to have cared for any man before. A man always expects to get a woman's first affection, but never seems to think that she may wish to have been "number one" also. So Reginald, in a very different tone to the one in which he had originally put the question, said—

"Tell me everything about it; let us have no secrets. I could bear anything but *that*. My wife's heart must be an open book to me. I shall never have one thought which you shall not share, and God forbid, that there was not equal confidence on your side. Tell me everything about your attachment—I can bear it; but I did hope that I was the first man to whom your lips ever breathed those words—'I love you.' Where is he?"

"Dead," said Violet.

Reginald felt thankful for that fact. A living lover is a match for a dead one any day.

"Where did you know him?" asked Reginald.

"Oh, he lived with us for three years, and I sat up with him for two nights before he died, and I have got a lock of his curly hair in a locket; such beautiful hair, quite different to yours," she added.

He felt very much induced to wish her "good morning," after such a heartless speech.

"Yes," she added, "and he would eat nothing except from my hand, poor fellow; he just laid his head on my arm and died."

"Who was he, and what was his name?" asked Reginald, after a pause.

"Do you think you can bear to hear it?" said Violet.

"Yes," said he, sadly; "I can bear anything now."

"Well, then," aid Violet, turning her face towards him with a merry, mischievous laugh, "his name was Nero, and he was the loveliest, dearest old Newfoundland dog that you ever saw. I cried for a week after his death, and he was my first and only love; so now I hope you are satisfied that he was only a dog."

"You sweet, little, horrid, tormenting darling," said Reginald, with the usual mixed

vocabulary of lovers ; “ how could you make me so miserable ? ”

“ Well, I *did* feel sorry when I saw you took it so seriously ; but when I begin a thing I always carry it through,” said Violet—pompously ; “ besides, I didn’t see why you were to have a first love, and I wasn’t ; so now you see we are on equal terms. Why is a man to have a woman’s heart all to himself, and to be very indignant if he thinks that any one else has had even a little bit of it ? and yet a poor woman is to be very thankful if a man deigns to bestow on her the wretched remains of what he has given to half-a-dozen other women. I don’t like other people’s leavings any more than *you* do, and have a great mind to have nothing to do with your poor maimed, second-hand heart. However, I suppose there’s enough left of it to love me, and that’s all I want,” she said, looking up in his face.

"My sweet child," he said, as he took both her hands in his, and gazed with a look of unutterable tenderness and solemnity in her eyes, "may my life be one long scene of misery and misfortune, if I ever, by thought, act, or word, make you regret what you have done this day, in giving your pure, young, fresh affections to me."

So they turned their steps homeward, both feeling in their hearts the happy heavenly sensations of loving and being loved—a flood of joy and happiness flowing in their souls—a love, pure and holy as that which our first parents experienced in Paradise when Eden's glorious bowers rejoiced over the love, without which, even Paradise itself would not have been perfect.

CHAPTER XVI.

LADY MAITLAND received her daughter's blushing confessions with a proper display of maternal tears, and hysterical weeping.

Sir Walter was highly pleased when Reginald begged him to confirm his daughter's consent. He was very proud of his future son-in-law, and looked forward with much pleasure to visiting Violet at Henleigh Castle, of whose glories Fenham had given a glowing description. Happily there was not the sadly

frequent cause which has separated so many loving hearts; the terrible curse of poverty, whose stern decrees have pronounced the divorce of thousands.

It is one of the consequences of our civilization, look at the happy savages in some lonely land where "settlements," "jointures," and other matters, which so often prevent "Cupid" being transformed into "Hymen," are unknown. *They* are not distracted with the awful questions as to "younger children's portions"—pin money for the bride, etc., etc., and all the thousand points to be settled, before the people, the most interested in it all, are allowed to be made easy as to the consent of all parties having been obtained. In *this*, certainly our savage brothers and sisters have the "pull" over us, but then if there are no pains in the shape of pecuniary difficulties, the savage bride elect has no corresponding

pleasures in the delights of the *corbeille de mariage*—no “trousseau” to prepare—no *cadeaux de noces* to receive, no delightful balancing between the rival attractions of satin and moiré, between Honiton and Brussels lace—all this—the civilized *fiancée* has before her. Had it been Miss Mostyn, instead of Violet, there would not have been such indifference to all these important questions, but Violet did not trouble her head about any of these things, and was highly amused when Lady Maitland said to her next morning, when she went as usual to her mother’s room,

“Violet, darling, I have been thinking, that as you are so very young, that I shall not let you wear a lace veil, but merely cloud you in tulle, which will be lighter, and I think I prefer stephanotis for your wreath to clematis. What do you think of for a travelling bonnet? *I* thought of a mauve crape. Do you think

that I should wear a white or a coloured bonnet at your wedding."

"Dear Mama," said Violet, "I will wear just whatever you choose. I leave it all to your taste, and I am sure it will be all right."

"Dear child," said her mother, much pleased, "as you have such confidence in my taste, I will take care that your trousseau shall not disgrace it; but perhaps Captain Douglas, I mean Reginald, will wish to superintend it himself; men are so fussy, and have odd notions about dress; perhaps he will insist on your being married in a bonnet, which will sadly put me out; he'll fancy that you will catch cold."

"I don't think Reginald will care what I wear, Mama," laughed Violet.

"Then I shall consider him a very improper person for you to marry," said Lady Maitland loftily, "when I was getting my trousseau,

your father chose all my dresses himself, and saw all my bonnets and wreaths tried on ; and even my shoes and boots. I hope, dear child, that you are not going to marry a man who will be indifferent to your appearance and dress. I think that a man should take an interest in what his wife wears, even to her boot lace."

"I don't think that Reginald will ever be indifferent to anything about me," said Violet, "but I am sure that he has such perfect confidence in your taste, that he would not presume to interfere. What can men know about these things ?"

"True," said Lady Maitland, compassionately, "true, indeed, poor things."

From that day forward, Lady Maitland's whole energies, (her stock-in-trade in this department was not large), were devoted to fashion books of every variety. It had the delightful effect of warding off her nervous

attacks, and her husband privately expressed to Fenham his wish, that his wife's whole future life might be spent in arranging trousseaux !

CHAPTER XVII.

IT WAS now getting late for Nice ; they had remained much longer than visitors generally do ; it was getting hot, and they began to speak of turning their steps homeward. The object of one party had been gained, for Reginald was now perfectly well, and the Maitlands had no particular object in remaining longer. The mosquitoes had begun to bite, and one of the plagues of Egypt, in the shape of the frogs, had begun. The noise and croaking of these animals at night was quite insufferable, it was bad enough even in the

Hotel, when, in the silence of night this horrid noise resembled the quacking of hundreds of the hoarsest ducks. What must it have been to the agonised ears of those who were living in villas, near the ditches and small streams, in which these noisy animals, chose to hold their soirées musicales ?

So they made all preparations for home. Reginald and Violet paid a last parting visit to the burial ground, where the fair young form of the sister of the one was turning into clay. The flowers were springing over her head, but they gladdened not her eyes ; their rich perfume was scenting the air, but it could not penetrate the thick clay which lay heavy above her breast ; there was beauty above and around her ; but neither sight nor sound could reach her. She saw not the sweet face of her sister, as she stood by her grave, nor the lover at her side. Ah ! what different fates had these two sisters met, who grew in beauty

side by side. For the one, life had assumed its fairest aspect, love and joy were hers, a prospect of a life of happiness with one whom she loved—and who loved her. For the other, the dark-deep grave with all its loathesome terrors, its loneliness, its silence, its decay. Instead of the wedding robe, the clinging shroud ; instead of the bridal garland, the worm twining round her brow ; instead of the fond caresses of love, the cold chilling embrace of death !

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE first of May was the day fixed for the party to leave Nice; they were to go by the lovely Cornice road to Genoa, and to cross the Alps by the Mont Cenis pass, which was now open. Miss Mostyn had rather absented herself from the party lately, which nobody regretted; and two or three days before our travellers started, she announced her intention of remaining a little longer at Nice with some friends. There were two gentlemen of the party, sons to her friend, and it struck her that, perhaps, one of these persons might be

the individual marked out by Providence for her future husband, so she declared her intention of remaining at Nice till her new friends should leave it.

Our party had a delightful drive from Nice to Genoa, where they remained a few days to lionize it, and then went by railway across the plains of Marengo to Arona; as they all wished to see the Lago Maggiore. They steamed down the lake next day, and landed at the Isola Bella, and went over the curious old Chateau of Count Borromeo. How they opened their eyes at the beauty of the Camellia trees (for they cannot be called shrubs *there*), and at the exquisite Rhododendrons hanging in crimson clusters, and at the deliciously perfumed magnolias! They were shown the bed where Napoleon slept the night before the battle of Marengo, and the fine old olive tree where he carved the word "battaglia," which remains there till this day, but which probably, is

occasionally refreshed like the blood of Rizzio at Holyrood! Then they rowed to the Isola Madre, where Fenham was profane enough to wish for a gun, that he might shoot some of the pheasants which were drinking from the waters of the lake in hundreds.

They returned to Arona, and from thence went by railway to Turin, and then after sleeping at Susa, they began to ascend the Alps, Sir Walter and Lady Maitland, and Mrs. Douglas in one carriage, Violet, Reginald, and Fenham, who acted as chaperon, in another.

“ Well, if I am to go with these lovers,” said Fenham, “ I must have a basket of *prog*, and a case of cigars, for I shall find it very dull, especially as I feel quite sure it’s going to rain.”

“ Rain,” said Violet, “ what an old croaking raven you are, Harry, to think of such a thing as rain, with such a lovely sky; why there isn’t a cloud.”

"Yes, but clouds may rise in the bluest sky," said Fenham, "many a bright morning has ended in a dark stormy night; remember *that* my little cousin, 'in time of peace prepare for war;' trust no sky, however bright it may be."

Violet looked at Reginald, and thought that *her* sky was too bright ever to know a cloud.

"Who was right about the rain?" cried Fenham, triumphantly, as after about an hour's ascent, a thick driving mist and drizzling rain came on, as successfully hiding all the grand scenery through which they were passing, as if it never existed.

"What a fellow you are, Fenham!" said Reginald, "I do believe that you would rather lose all this scenery than not have your prognostications realised."

"Well, it's all very well for you two," said Fenham, "who only want the scenery of each other's eyes, but a poor wretch like me

that has nobody's eyes to look into, and nobody's hand to hold, finds it rather dull."

"Well, I'm sure," said Reginald laughing, "I did my best to provide you with both these, and you wouldn't take the chance that the gods offered you."

"Poor dear Miss Mostyn, I do hope that these two individuals that are in the same house will do something matrimonial for her!" said Fenham; "it's very distressing to see the anxiety of the female sex to be 'Mrs. Anybody.'"

"I don't see any great anxiety that the female sex manifest to become 'Mrs. Harry Fenham,'" said Violet.

"Ah, that's because I'm too honourable to tell tales. My life is a perpetual leap-year, women incessantly proposing to me; but I have not yet seen the lady worthy of being 'Mrs. Fenham.' Well, this is a treat certainly there's the rain harder than ever; if it wasn't

for the honour and glory of the thing, and the idea of crossing the Alps, one might just as well be seated in the back parlour of a public house looking out on a dead wall—much better, for then a fellow could get a glass of brandy and water, which one hasn't a chance of on these confounded Alps. My own opinion is that there are no such things as the Alps, that they are relations in the direct line of 'Mrs. Harris,' of glorious, pious, and immortal memory. Depend upon it, my young friends, crossing the Alps is very like matrimony, much better in theory than practice; that's why I intend marriage always to be in theory in *my* case. Rain and mist diversified by mist and rain, extremely jolly I must own, especially when you are with a pair of lovers who don't pay you the slightest attention. I assure you, Violet, I didn't mean anything personal. So you might have spared

yourself the trouble of that pinch, which I feel assured hurt *you*, more than it did *me*. Here, where's the 'Guide Book,' that we may know what we ought to be seeing. 'Here the scenery is truly magnificent. The reader will behold on looking to the right, a tremendous precipice, which it will make his blood run cold only to contemplate.' Well, we're spared that trial ; the fog is very considerate in that particular ! Mortals are very ungrateful, and goodness knows what horrors are hidden from our eyes by this providential fog ; but I only wish I could bring an action against these confounded Alps for obtaining travellers under false pretences."

By this time they had reached the top of the mountain pass.

" Surely that must be water," said Violet, " frozen over and covered with snow."

" Water up here, you silly little puss !" said

Fenham, who being a man, of course, had been brought up in that creed which teaches that he must know better than a woman.

"Make him bet you a dozen pairs of gloves," said Reginald.

"Well, I will bet you a dozen pairs of the best gloves to be got in Paris, that it is not a lake!"

Of course he lost, for it was a small lake, frozen over, out of which delicious trout were taken through a sluice for their luncheon. (You may be sure Violet made him pay his bet when he got to Paris). As soon as they reached the top and descended into Switzerland, the weather became lovely, and they had a delightful drive till they reached Lans-les-bourg, where they were to sleep. A miserable place it was, and so awfully cold.

Violet and Reginald amused themselves by spreading all the travelling rugs and warm shawls over the cold carpetless floor of their

sitting-room. Sir Walter, who was a little bit of a gourmand, and did not like to trust to the *fortune du pot* at such out of the way places, had desired his courier to bring a plentiful supply of cold eatables, so they managed pretty well in the way of food; but the cold was intense, and the air felt as if it were in contact with an iceberg.

Next morning they were early *en route*, as they intended to take the line of railway from St. Jean Maurienne. They had a most delightful railway journey to Aix les Bains, where they intended to stop. The train rushing along by the side of a brawling river, with the Alps, whose snows were tinted with the rose-coloured rays of the setting sun on one side, and on the other a chain of undulating hills, covered with larches, whose exquisite green early tints, formed a beautiful contrast to the snow-white mountains.

They left Aix-les-bains for Geneva next

morning, and after seeing all that was to be seen (except the principal thing, Mont Blanc, who was in the sulks, and refused to doff his mantle of clouds), they embarked in the steamer, and set sail, or rather steam for Lausaune. It was evening when they reached Ouchy, and how rapturous they were in their admiration of the exquisite scenery around them. The lake, as placid as a mill pool, only ruffled by the long snowy-white waves which followed in the wake of the steamboat, glowed with the brightest crimson, as the setting sun sank lower and lower, and dyed the waters with his last beams. Reflected almost into the middle of the lake were the shadows of the surrounding mountains of a deep blue ; all was intensely still, all was intensely beautiful. They had determined to remain two or three days at Lausaune, and took up their abode at the Hotel Gibbon, notwithstanding the drawback of the tremendous hill up to the town.

Next morning they prepared for an excursion by steamer to Chillon and the further end of the lake. The day was glorious, but tremendously hot. They disembarked at Montreux, and set off for Chillon. Oh, how exquisite was the view. Before them the rich blue expanse of the lake—the “Dents du Midi” mountain, with its seven teeth defined against the sky, white with eternal snow. On one side rose a hill sloping to the water’s edge, covered with larch trees, greener than imagination can describe. They entered the castle of Chillon, with Byron’s exquisite poem fresh in their memories. Violet and Reginald had read it together the preceding evening as they sat in the garden at the Hotel Gibbon. They saw the

“ Seven pillars of gothic mould
In Chillon’s dungeons, deep and old.”

They gazed on the traces marked on the

pavement which are called “les trois pas de Bonnivard,” where his weary march as far as the length of his chain would permit, was graven in the stone. They gazed on

“The blue Rhone in fullest flow,”

and the little isle with its “three tall trees” waving in the fresh breeze from the mountains, on which the poor captive gazed from his living tomb, with such longings for liberty as probably the human soul can never conceive, till it has lost the boon.

CHAPTER XIX.

THEY reached Paris late the next evening but one, and next morning Reginald and Violet strolled into the gardens of the Tuilleries. They seated themselves on the chairs placed for the public, when suddenly a woman passed them, and gazed fixedly at Violet. Reginald felt his blood run cold at the look—it was Mrs. Churchill. She was alone ; and though handsomely dressed, there was a look about her which conveyed to his mind the idea that her circumstances were altered—she herself was much changed. There were deep lines

in her face, and a look of haggard wretchedness that it pained him to see. She had no rouge, and the absence of it showed that such a practice once begun, must be carried on, for there were yellow marks on her cheeks, the result of the use of it. There was something in her appearance, and the manner in which she looked at Violet, that made the young girl feel uncomfortable.

"Violet," said her lover, "that woman is Mrs. Churchill, the woman that broke my heart, and murdered your brother!"

Violet turned pale as death, and clung to his arm.

"Oh, take me away, Reginald," she said; "I cannot bear to be near her."

"She is gone my darling," he said, soothingly. "She is in distress evidently."

"No; she is coming to us again. Oh, take me home, Reginald."

He stood up and put her arm into his.

They passed close to Mrs. Churchill, and there was something so subdued, so altered in her appearance, that as he passed her, he took off his hat to her. She had been his enemy, and had done him almost the greatest wrong that one human being can do to another. But she was a fallen enemy, and Reginald would not insult a fallen enemy, would not tread upon a fallen foe. He felt pity for a proud woman, crushed, as she evidently was by some heavy blow.

"Violet," he said, when they had passed her, "the hand of retribution has fallen upon *that* woman; possibly she has met the fate to which she has condemned so many others, and has been herself deceived, cast off, and forsaken."

Mrs. Churchill followed them in the distance till they reached their hotel; and that evening a note was brought to Reginald from her, telling him that she was in want, and

begging him to lend her £20. Reginald enclosed £50 in a envelope, and sent it to her without a line ; and he told Violet what he had done, and she said he was right ; and he told Fenhan, and he said it was right.

“ I met an old friend yesterday,” said the latter, “ and he asked me if I remembered her in India, and he told me that the divorce is soon to come on, and then she will lose everything ; her present lover, too, you may be certain.”

“ Unhappy woman,” said Reginald ; “ can nothing be done for her ?”

“ Nothing,” answered Fenham. “ No earthly power can save her, and she will not look for help to a heavenly one ; there is but one end for her. I see it as plainly as if I had some fore-knowledge of it.”

“ What ?” said Reginald, and he turned as

pale as death at the ghost his fancy had conjured up.

"Suicide!" answered Fenham, solemnly.
"When a person has nothing left on earth and no hope or belief in a future, no fear of hell, no hope of heaven, there is but one object for them—annihilation. Mrs. Churchill is one of those, who have reasoned themselves out of all belief, so there is nothing for *her* but suicide."

"My God!" said Reginald, "is this the woman whom I loved so madly? and yet even now I cannot bear to think of her in distress; with my whole heart and soul filled with my darling Violet, I can feel for this wretched woman."

The party left Paris next day, and arrived at Calais, and soon the white cliffs of Dover gleamed in the evening sun. Here they were to separate. Reginald's leave had expired,

but in a very short time he intended to leave the army. The Maitlands were going into Somersetshire where they lived, but before they parted from Reginald and his mother —the day was fixed, which was to unite the lovers “till death should part them.”

CHAPTER XX.

THREE months after this a woman was lying on a sofa in a darkened room. We shall recognise her by these facts. She held in her hand the *Times*, and she read the following paragraph—

“Married, on the 10th instant, by the Bishop of Ripon (uncle to the bride), Captain Reginald Douglas, of Henleigh Castle, late of Her Majesty’s Coldstream Guards, to Violet Maud, only surviving daughter of

Sir Walter Maitland, of Croome Castle, Somersetshire, and of Morleigh Manor House, Wiltshire."

She turned the paper, and on the other page read that the divorce had been granted in the case "*Churchill v. Churchill*," and laid it down without a word.

A week later, the horror-thirsting public had full scope for the gratification of their tastes, in the details of the "suicide, by poison, of Mrs. Alfred Churchill, whose name had lately been brought before them in the divorce case." Her children having been taken from her, she had with them, lost the allowance. Only a very small sum was granted to her by Captain Churchill. Her foreign lover had deserted her. Poor, equally in character and purse, there was

nothing for her but to leave a world, which had nothing to offer, so she died by her own hand, and closed a life of heartless depravity, by a death of hopelessness and horror.

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